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CHINESE RELIGIOUS IDEAS

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A Christian Valuation

BY

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TO MY
COLLEAGUES IN THE MISSION FIELD
PAST AND PRESENT
CHINESE AND FOREIGN

Gift from the Author.

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PREFACE

Duff Missionary Lectureship

It is no small honour and an equally great responsibility to be appointed lecturer in connection with a lectureship founded in accordance with the wishes and perpetuating the memory of so great a missionary as Dr Duff, an honour and responsibility made weightier by the eminence and ability of previous lecturers. I thank the Trustees of the Lectureship for this honour, and beg them to accept these lectures as a sincere though inadequate attempt to discharge this responsibility.

Of the eight lectures here published the substance of six was used also in a course of lectures which, at the invitation of the Council of the Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, I gave to students there, and I am grateful both to the Trustees of the Duff Missionary Lectureship and to the Council of the Selly Oak Colleges for their courtesy in consenting to this arrangement. The lectures on Taoism and on Chu Hsi were given at Selly Oak only.

To my friends, the Rev. W. F. Halliday, M.A. and the Rev. I. J. Roberton, D.D., I am indebted for their kindness in reading the lectures in MS. and giving me their advice.

P. J. M.

INTRODUCTION

When the Trustees of this Lectureship did me the honour of appointing me to deliver this course of lectures, they laid no special burden on me other than this, that my subject should be connected with China. No injunction could have been more in the line of my own choice. Here, however many my disqualifications, I may claim at least the qualification of a personal interest, a sincere admiration, common to all who really know them, for the Chinese people, and a desire to contribute what I can to a better understanding of them on our part. More especially, in accepting this appointment, I hoped that I might be of some service both to those who go to China as ambassadors of Christ and to those at home on whose intelligent sympathy their work depends. With this aim in view it remained to choose a subject. To be restricted to China was still to know the weight of too much liberty. Many topics suggested themselves for consideration. The long political history of China, her social economy, her great achievements in art might provide appropriate matter even for a purely missionary lectureship; certainly they must not be forgotten by any missionary. Much might be said in the way of description, and even more in the way of speculation, with regard to her present distressing state and its issues. Putting these and other topics

aside, there remained as specially pertinent the still too vast subject of her religious development, what forms of religion seem to have been native to her and what have been her reactions to religions that have come to her from outside, Buddhism, Mohammedanism and Christianity in its Nestorian, Roman Catholic and Protestant forms, as these religions successively reached her. Her religious development is, of course, going on yet. In her present revolutionary epoch there has appeared a breaking away from her traditional religion and morality. The deification of Confucius as the equal of Heaven and Earth was speedily followed by his downfall from the pinnacle of infallibility. His authority, so long paramount, was challenged. The most callow student could no longer be coerced by a quotation from the Sage. Individual caprice took the place of communal conservatism. Thus there arose justifiable concern lest moral chaos should supervene on the undermining of customary morality, and the excesses of revolt produced a Confucian reaction. Moreover, in the revolt a still more extreme vein also showed itself. Not Confucianism only but all spiritual values were challenged. Religion was told off as superstition and morality as mere convention. So from this whole situation there has arisen an antichristian movement of more than one colour. Christianity is attacked by those who would abolish all religion in the name of intellectual liberty. It is attacked also by those who would reinstate Confucianism in the name of social stability. It is attacked by both parties in the name of Chinese nationality.

Nor is this all. In addition to this nationalistic attack and Confucian reaction there is a revival of interest in Buddhism and Taoism, and various essays are being made at some form of syncretistic religion in which Christianity is allotted a place which it would be her death to accept.

To meet this various attack an equally various defence is needed, and as one small contribution to such defence it seemed that it might not be without use to look at some of those forms of religion and modes of spiritual thought that have had vogue in China, and to appraise their value from the Christian point of view. If we can thus make it evident that Christianity, though critical of their aberrations and imperfections, is also conservative of their best elements, more than one advantage may be gained. That these best elements, separately existing here and there in them, can be found in harmonious togetherness in Christianity is no small proof of the primacy of the Christian faith. Our investigation, moreover, provides an answer to the anti-religious Chinese in so far as the disclosure of elements common to various religions accredits religion as normally human. It may also reassure the religiously-minded Chinese and disarm their hostility, not by an unreal assent to their beliefs, but by a sympathetic interpretation of them. In pursuing our investigations we must not fail to do justice to the twofold, critical and conservative, relation of Christianity to other faiths. Because of this relation our missionary vocation is neither superfluous nor hopeless. We have in Christianity something better than these religions are, and so

necessity is laid on us to preach the Gospel. But the good that is in them and which we need not grudge to acknowledge is for our encouragement, and opens to us a door of hope. "Christ is life," said Principal Denney, "yes, and light and truth and love and righteousness; and wherever these exist in the world, confessed or unconfessed, in Greek or Jew, in Buddhist or Brahmin, there Christ is, and life and grace and God." It is in this spirit that we go forward to such survey as time and ability permit.

CHINESE RELIGIOUS IDEAS

CHAPTER I

"The God of Your Fathers"

It is a tribute to the greatness of Confucius that to think of China is to be reminded of him. In any enumeration of the world's great men Confucius takes his place as the representative of the Chinese people. Probably, however, with all this recognition of his greatness, it is not as Prophet that we naturally think of him, nor would I have ventured of myself to apply to him that title. The suggestion of it is due to a well-known Chinese scholar, Professor Giles. In his Hibbert Lectures on "Confucianism and its Rivals," after saying that the idea of a Supreme Ruler of the Universe has been much obscured for the people at large by the glorification of Confucius, he tells us how he thinks that the need of the Republic which was crying out for a State Religion can best be met. "Let the Chinese be encouraged, by the erection of temples and by forms of prayer, to join in the old Unitarian worship of 4000 years ago. Let them transfer to Thien, God, discarding the Duality caused by the later introduction of Shang-ti, all those thoughts of reverence and gratitude which have been centred so long upon the human to the neglect of the

divine. Their stirring battle-cry would then be: 'There is no God but God and Confucius is His Prophet.'" This suggestion made by so eminent a scholar may serve as our starting-point, whether or not we shall be able to accept it as our conclusion. Clearly, to judge of Confucius' prophetic power we must know two things: What was his religious heritage? and What did he make of it? Our first question then is this: What was that old Unitarian worship of 4000 years ago? Happily—and according to credible tradition we owe our good fortune to Confucius himself—we have documents which throw much light on the ancient Chinese. The origins of Chinese civilisation are as difficult to recover from the dark backward and abysm of time as those of any other race. These documents, however, though they cannot rival Egyptian or Babylonian antiquity, take us back a very long way. The most important of them for our purpose are those two of the Chinese classics which are known as the Shu-King and the Shi-King, the Book of History and the Book of Poetry. The Shu-King records a series of events, though by no means in a continuous narrative, from c. 2000 B.C. down to 627 (or 624) B.C. The Shi-King is a collection of poetical pieces, odes as it is the fashion to call them, composed at various dates from the Shang era, 1765-1122 B.C., down to the time of King Ting of the Chow dynasty, 605-585 B.C. From these two books it is possible to form some picture of the ancient Chinese, what sort of people they were, their types of manly and of female beauty, their family life with its wives and concubines, the preference of

sons over daughters, the materials and colours of their garments, their earth-built houses, their hunting and fishing, the grain they cultivated, the food they ate, their military equipment, their political system, the feudal lords and the Sovereign, the righteous government of some, the intolerable tyranny of others, the uprising of the instruments of Heaven's anger, punitive expeditions, economic arrangements, moral allocutions by monarchs, exhortations and remonstrances of faithful ministers ; and along with these secular details, as they may be called, we are given glimpses also of the religious beliefs then held.

The religious world of the ancient Chinese as depicted in these books is complex. Spiritual beings are referred to under general terms such as shen-ch'i (spirits of heaven and of earth) or kuei-shen (either manes and spiritual beings, or spiritual beings as a class). There are also specific references to various objects of religious regard, Shang-ti, Heaven, the Six Honoured Ones, the Twelve Hills, the Great Rivers, Kings Wen and Wu, the Ruler of Horses, the Father of Husbandry, the Father of War, the Spirit of the Path. We read also of the Drought Demon and of the region of demons or ghosts of the departed (kuei-fang). For the dead do not wholly die. There is an after-life. A virtuous monarch like King Wen is, after death, in the presence of Shang-ti. To the ancestors offerings are made by their descendants and their blessing is invoked.

Of some of these beings nothing is known, either how they came to be or what their attributes

are. There is neither theogony nor cosmogony. Nor must we allow the use in translation of the word demon to lead us into thinking of a class of evil spirits. There is no evidence of a division of spirits into good and bad. Even the Drought Demon, it might be argued, is not necessarily malignant. To inflict drought is his function in the universal economy, and if Drought is ultimately due to Heaven, he may be no more a malignant being than a state-executioner is. But one must beware of systematising beyond what is written. Things are spoken of in an incidental way as they are believed to exist, but no attempt is made to describe in any systematic fashion their relations one to another.

To this spiritual world man approaches through sacrifice and prayer, his access being regulated according to his social position. The Sovereign alone worships Shang-ti. From the spiritual world response is made to man in dreams and through divination by the tortoise-shell and the sacred grass. This mass of religious beliefs and practices is the original deposit of the religious life of the Chinese so far as we can reach back to their origins.

In this religious world one Being is pre-eminent, under two names Shang-ti and Thien. That the Being is one though the names are two is clear enough from various indications. The decree which governs human affairs is referred indifferently to Thien and to Shang-ti. The actions and functions ascribed to one are ascribed also to the other. There is frequent transition from the one term to the other in the same context, e.g., "For the many

crimes of the sovereign of Hsia, Thien has given charge to destroy him. The sovereign of Hsia is an offender, and, as I fear Shang-ti, I dare not but punish him." We may safely conclude with Professor Giles that the two terms "are beyond all doubt names for one and the same Being." It is worth noting in passing that the term Thien in a religious reference occurs in the Shu King much more frequently then the term Shang-ti or Ti. The actual figures are these : Ti or Shang-ti occurs 44 times, while Thien, with or without some epithet, occurs 132 times. This point may be of moment if we should speculate on the pre-documentary development of Chinese religion, or on the influence of Confucius on Chinese religious thought.

It is here that we touch on part of the subject-matter of the famous Term controversy. It has seemed to some Christian scholars that there is a special point of contact for our Christian faith in the conception of this Being called Shang-ti or Thien. Of these two names they have, on the whole, preferred Shang-ti. They have not scrupled to use that term in speaking of the Christian God, and in their preaching they claimed to be recalling the Chinese to the God of their fathers. There were others who felt this use of the term Shang-ti to be as misleading and improper as it would have been for St Paul to have spoken of the God he preached as Zeus or Jupiter. These, therefore, absolutely refused to use the term Shang-ti and spoke of God by a term which they said meant God, but which their opponents said could only be translated "spirit." This Term controversy, which

had ramifications but the core of which was the question of the name to be applied to God, was carried on by Protestant missionaries a couple of generations or so ago with great learning and no little heat. Roman Catholic missionaries had already been through it at an earlier stage of Christian mission work in China. Then the Dominicans and Franciscans carried it against the Jesuits that, with the Pope's mandate but against the Emperor's opinion, the Roman Catholic Church should not use either Shang-ti or Thien as an appellation for God, but a third term, Thien-Chu, which was supposed to be fresh and free from heathen taint, though it was, in fact, already in existence as the name of an inferior member of the Chinese Pantheon. They thus gained a victory which, according to some authorities, destroyed the hopes that had been cherished of the speedy progress of Christianity in China under Imperial patronage, whatever such progress might have been worth.

The Term controversy has more or less burned itself out, though the ashes may be deceitful. So recently as 1924 we find a missionary protesting: "How can God bless us when He is called by the name of an idol?" The difficulty created by the use of the term Shang-ti, it need hardly be pointed out, is not, as is here suggested, in the mind of God, but in the minds of men. Were it otherwise we might ask how God can bless those who address Him as Jehovah, which is, at least, bad Hebrew. I cannot believe that God is inferior in broad-mindedness to a medical colleague of mine who, with a smile, ministered to an old woman who, in

her innocence, addressed him by the uncomplimentary title "Mr Foreign Devil." The difficulty is with the minds of men, and the term controversy well illustrates a pair of dangers, Scylla and Charybdis, which embarrass the Christian preacher in non-Christian lands, the danger, on the one hand, of using a term which may distort a fundamental Christian idea, and the danger on the other of so losing a point of contact with the non-Christian mind as to make himself difficult to understand. As we inquire then what the ancient Chinese thought of Shang-ti, we may keep in our minds the question whether or not there is any grave danger in using that term of the Christian God.

Etymologically at least the term is unobjectionable. It is correctly translated 'Supreme Ruler.' However inadequate, therefore, to the Christian conception of God, it has nothing in it repugnant to that conception. It is fair to point out to the Chinese—as indeed is often done—that they are illogical in their post-classical application of this term to other objects of worship. How can there be more than one Supreme? How far this logic, inherent in the term, was recognised in the most ancient times we shall see from a study of the Classics. Let us note now, as indicative of some recognition of it, that from the ancient days down to the present only the Sovereign was allowed to worship Shang-ti. Indeed, one objection to the Christian use of the term by ordinary folk for the object of their worship was just what seemed its unwarrantable presumption, a charge which, when one thinks

of it, really warrants the Christian claim to use it. How can Christianity claim less than to open to all men communion with the Most High?

The connotation of the term is, however, more important than its etymology. When we turn then to the Shu King we find such things as these said of Shang-ti. The great Shang-ti has conferred on the inferior people a moral sense, compliance with which would show their nature invariably right. Shang-ti puts down one dynasty and raises up another in accordance with righteousness. His decree appointing any house to the Imperial dignity is not irrevocable, or, as it is put, "The ways of Shang-ti are not invariable." On the good doer he sends down all blessings: on the evil doer he sends down all miseries. He who by a successful rebellion brings a wicked dynasty to an end is the instrument of Shang-ti. One such leader of revolt says: "The sovereign of Hsia is an offender, and, as I fear Shang-ti, I dare not but punish him." Successive dynasties, the destroyed and the destroyer, thus acknowledge one and the same Shang-ti. Shang-ti is spoken of as exercising His moral sway over the Miao, a race or tribe alien from the speaker. It is perhaps legitimate to generalise and say that Shang-ti rules over all races through all ages. "Shang-ti was moved to anger" by the folly of one ruler. On the other hand, the fame of King Wen "ascended up to the High Shang-ti, and Shang-ti approved." Because of the virtues of the Viscount of Wei "Shang-ti will always enjoy his offerings." Thus the emphasis throughout is on the righteous sway of Shang-ti. Shang-ti is spoken of as personal and

anthropopathic, e.g., He is pleased or is angry, but, so far as the Shu King is concerned, He is not conceived as anthropomorphic. One monarch indeed says: "I dreamed that Shang-ti gave me a good assistant": but it is not necessary to infer from this that Shang-ti appeared in any form, human or otherwise. Perhaps, if following Legge we translate Shang-ti by the word 'God,' the phrase that jars most on the Christian ear is that in which it is said of the Emperor Thang that by the reverent cultivation of his virtue he became the "fellow of Shang-ti." This, we are told by Legge, is spoken of a sovereign whose virtue is such that he is the one correlate to the Supreme Sovereign above. It is said also of a departed sovereign who is called to associate with God in the great sacrificial services rendered to God by the reigning emperor. In the former sense the phrase hardly goes beyond what was said originally of a human monarch in Psalm xlv. 6, according to R.V. text or margin. In any case "correlate" did not mean to the Chinese "co-equal." Thus it is said of a deified hero, Hou-tseih: "Thou didst prove thyself the correlate of Heaven. Thou didst confer on us the wheat and the barley which God appointed for the nourishment of all," where obviously there is a precedency conceded to God. Again in a time of distress a ruler exclaims: "There is no spirit whom I have not honoured. Hou-tseih is not equal to the occasion. God does not come to us," where equally obviously the last clause indicates the climax of abandonment and implies, therefore, that God is greater than his correlate Hou-tseih.

With what the Shu King says of Shang-ti or Thien the Shi King is in general agreement. There are, however, certain differences to be noted. To begin with one which not unnaturally distinguishes Odes from Annals, we have in the Shi King a greater liveliness of apostrophe to God, a certain daring in references to Him. "Great Heaven, unjust, is sending down these exhausting disorders." "O unpitying Great Heaven." "Compassionate Heaven, how is it that thou dost exercise no forethought, no care?" Passionate expressions such as these are not necessarily signs of irreverence or of a lack of religion; rather, they may express a strong religious sense which feels itself outraged by the hard facts of life. If the parallel is not pressed too far, we can find like expressions in the Book of Job: "Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands?" "Thou art turned to be cruel to me: with the might of thy hand thou persecutest me."

A second point of difference between the Shu King and the Shi King is that in the latter there is a greater tendency to identify the being worshipped with the visible heaven, or, at least, to refer to Him under the name Heaven in words that are strictly applicable only to the visible vault above us. We have, e.g., such expressions as these: "O distant and azure Heaven! By what man was this brought about?" "O azure Heaven! look on these proud men: pity these troubled ones." And again: "All is going to ruin. I have no strength to do anything, and I think of the Power

in the azure vault." So Legge translates this last sentence, but in fact the text says only "I think of the azure vault." In face of such expressions as these it is difficult to follow Legge when he denies that there has been in the mind of the Chinese any confusion of the Supreme Being with the visible heaven, and asserts that when they use the term Thien in speaking of Him they "do not think of the material heavens at all." Suzuki is perhaps nearer to their state of mind when he says that Shang-ti, as thought of by them, "did not exactly reside in heaven, but heaven was his material or objective expression. Figuratively speaking, Heaven was Shang-ti and Shang-ti was Heaven" —a religious idea, may we say, entangled in a physical image, like Milton's "tawny lion pawing to set free his hinder parts."

Possibly the Shi King differs from the Shu King in yet another and quite different direction. It is perhaps more anthropomorphic. It does not indeed carry us far in that direction to find location ascribed to God as when it is said that King Wen ascends on the right and left of God. But there are other hints. Of a young lady it is said: "She appears like a visitant from heaven: she appears like a goddess." So Legge renders the lines. The word Ti, which elsewhere he translates 'God,' he here translates 'goddess,' out of respect no doubt to the lady in the comparison. I do not think that there is in the Shu King or Shi King any allusion to a goddess: these ancient books are happily free from a bisexual mythology. It would certainly savour of anthropomorphism to say that

the lady was like God. But we are not shut up to this. The exclamatory force of the original is perhaps better represented by "Ah, how heavenly! Ah, how divine!" What is indicated is rather the quality of the emotion the lady excites than any resemblance of her form to God. Still more remarkable is what is said of Kang Yuen, an empress who, while sacrificing and praying that her childlessness might be taken away, "trod on a toe-print made by God and was moved. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son," the Hou-tseih to whom reference has already been made. Taken as it stands, the passage is without parallel elsewhere in the Shu King and the Shi King. This is in fact the only trace of sexuality in all that is said of the Divine in these books, a very remarkable contrast to what is found in other non-Christian religions.

The long period covered by the documents in the Shu and the Shi naturally suggests the question whether we can trace in them any development of the main religious ideas. From very early times, as we have seen, there is reference to spirits of heaven and spirits of earth, and in this distinction we have perhaps a starting-point for the later development of thorough-going dualism. At the beginning of the Chow dynasty Heaven and Earth are recognised as the parents of all things, a style of speaking which, as Legge says, is quite new and places Heaven and Earth in the place of Heaven simply or of God (Shang-ti). He goes on to say that this deification of Heaven and Earth "took its rise from the Yi King, of which King Wen may properly be regarded as the author." A little

later, in the time of the same Chow dynasty, there occurs a reference, the only one of its kind in the Shu King, to Yin and Yang. These form in later Chinese philosophy a fundamental duality at work in the universe; and though it is true that "there is nothing to warrant our reading into this first reference to them all that later speculation made of them," still there is here a pointer in the direction of that speculation. So much for development in the Shu King. In the Shi King there is a development somewhat parallel. There is on the whole a lessening of the personal note in references to Shang-ti, and all the cases of what we may call confusion of the Supreme Being with the visible vault of heaven occur in the later rather than in the earlier odes, none of them in any ode earlier than 877 B.C., by which time the Chow influence would be well established.

This completes what we have to say of the conception we find in the two Classics of History and of the Odes of the Being worshipped as Shang-ti or Thien. We need not greatly concern ourselves with the question of a difference in the connotation of these two terms. If there is any difference, it is at any rate not very clear cut. Professor Giles speaks of Thien as God passive, Shang-ti as God active: Thien as Jahveh or Jehovah, Shang-ti as God. But it is difficult to see why prayers for help should be addressed to Thien, if Thien is passive, or why a passive Thien should be spoken of as compassionate or unjust or cruel. These seem to be attributes rather of an active being. Nor does Professor Giles' Hebrew parallel greatly illuminate

the subject. According to Chu Hsi, than whom there can hardly be a higher Chinese authority, Thien is used when it is a question of the protection of the inferior beings who owe to Him their existence, while Shang-ti is used to indicate the idea of power and of government. Even this distinction is neither clear nor easily made out from the documents. It may perhaps be said that the few anthropomorphic allusions attach themselves to Shang-ti rather than to Thien. The use of this latter term may also have entangled its users in a confusion of the spiritual with the physical meaning of Heaven and so have led to a co-ordinating of Heaven with Earth and to a dualistic view of nature in which the idea of a personal transcendent God is lost. Professor Giles, who insists that God is the correct translation of Thien, speaks of "the duality caused by the later introduction of Shang-ti." It may be that Thien is the earlier term in the prehistoric development of Chinese religion. So far as the documents as we now have them are concerned the term Shang-ti is chronologically prior to Thien and the duality, except in name, is not marked.

Speculation has, of course, been busy about the origin of this religious conception. The use of the two terms, Shang-ti and Thien, may indicate, as some scholars suggest, that we have in Chinese religion the coalescence of two streams of religious development. But, if it is so, the coalescence dates a very long way back. Clearly, the term Shang-ti can have come into existence only at a somewhat advanced stage of social development, and its use, therefore, in our most ancient documents proves

that they fall a long way short of taking us back to the religious origins of the Chinese. Several theories of these origins have been propounded. If one must speculate, perhaps the likeliest view is that we have here a case of development from nature worship rising, *pari passu* with social development, to the thought of a supreme ruler, still, however, connected with the sky. Such an origin would have its parallels in the idea of the Vedic Varuna, so remarkable for its early moral elevation and its later eclipse, or in the idea of Zeus, capable in the hands of Æschylus of such lofty ethical development. Another interesting parallel may perhaps be found in the Mo-so, an aboriginal people in China (*Ryland's Library Bulletin*, 25th Anniv., p. 99). This scientific question of origin, however, is not ours. The original association of the idea of Shang-ti with the sky, were it fully proved, is no objection to its Christian use, if it has worked itself clear from objectionable associations. Ours is the practical question: Is the connotation of the term Shang-ti such that its use by the Christian preacher would only distort and so make futile his declaration of God? or has it such truth in it and such capacity to carry more as to warrant its employment? If this latter alternative is correct, as I think it is, then obviously it is most important that the Christian preacher make full use of this point of contact with the mental furniture of a people so rooted in the past as the Chinese race has ever been.

I have tried to set out fairly the classical conception of Shang-ti or Thien. We must allow for a certain blurring of this conception by the develop-

ment just sketched ; but as it forms itself in the mind of one who reads attentively the Shu and the Shi, it remains a very remarkable religious achievement. Let us remind ourselves of its content. In the spiritual world, which does not lack other inhabitants to whom the ancient Chinese offered worship, one Being stands pre-eminent. He is supreme. There is no Fate behind Him as there is so often behind all the gods of non-Christian theologies. It is His decree that controls all things. If He is not creator He is at least so far at the origin of things that from Him has come man's innate knowledge of right and wrong. He must not be thought of as aloof on high. He ascends and descends about our doings and daily inspects us wherever we are. In this inspection of men His first consideration is of their righteousness. With the good He is pleased and He visits the evil with His displeasure. Kings and dukes are His shepherds to guide men in the right way. He removeth kings and setteth kings up. His favour is preserved by humble well-doing and is lost by wicked impiety. He warns the evil-doer and against the impenitent ruler he stirs up the instrument of His justice. These are the main features of this great conception which the Chinese had reached a thousand years and more before the Christian era. Legge and Giles, who approach the subject from different standpoints, agree that nothing is said of Shang-ti in the Shu which might not have been said of Jehovah in the Old Testament.

Of course, our isolating treatment of this conception of Shang-ti must not lead us to forget that

it comes to us as part of that whole complex of religious ideas of which we have already spoken. It is not easy to characterise this ancient Chinese religion. To call it polytheism is doing more than justice to the spirits of hills and rivers which still "fall within the natural system of things." To call it spiritism is unfair to the conception of Shang-ti with its large measure of ethical freedom. It is as if emerging from a mass of lower spiritist ideas the one conception of Shang-ti had risen to the level of polytheistic religions, and because of its uniqueness might still trend upwards. We cannot agree with Professor Giles that we have here a monotheism which he even calls a "pure monotheism," a term which surely excludes the acknowledgment of other gods; but, in the recognition of such a being as Shang-ti or Thien as the Supreme Being, we have at least a monarchianism of a very high ethical type.

Such, then, was Confucius' religious heritage. Our question now is, What use did he make of it? Can we, as Professor Giles suggests, think of Confucius as the prophet of God? From his success or failure in that rôle, can we gather any hints for our Christian propaganda?

We note, to begin with, that Confucius did not profess to originate. He claimed only to transmit. This, however, does not of itself exclude him from the goodly fellowship of the prophets. It is noticeable that the Hebrew prophets always claimed to be recalling their people from innovations and corruptions back to the faith of their fathers. In any case no man can merely transmit, and trans-

mitting was with Confucius a more personal matter than the handing on of documents. He transmitted also by teaching, and no teacher can pass on ideas without some modification of them.

Let us ask then what use Confucius made of the idea of Shang-ti or Thien. One answer, which it would be disappointing to have to accept, is that, so far from using or developing the idea, he rather impoverished it and allowed it to drop into the background. Complaint is made of his cold and somewhat agnostic temperament. This agnostic temperament betrays itself, so it is argued, in his use of the more impersonal term Thien in preference to the more personal term Shang-ti. Now the term Thien is certainly congenial to a rather impersonal view of the Supreme Being, and Christians in China have been right when, in seeking a point of contact with the old faith, they have preferred to use the term Shang-ti. There is equally no doubt of the absence of the term Shang-ti from the recorded utterances of Confucius. On the other hand, he at least allowed the term Shang-ti to stand in the records he transmitted. What is even more to the point, if he preferred the term Thien himself, it is hardly fair to say that he did this " instead of following the phraseology of the older Sages." He was in fact following what, as we noted, was the predominating usage in his authorities. What seems a more disconcerting indication of a cold religious attitude is the fact that in " The Spring and Autumn " Classic, the only work we have whose making is ascribed to Confucius himself, there is no religious reference at all. The

indication, however, is less conclusive than at first sight it seems to be, if we take the nature of the Classic into account. It is a chronicle of events in a dry light. "The notices are absolutely unimpassioned. A base murder and a shining act of heroism are chronicled just as the eclipses of the sun are chronicled. So and so took place—that is all. No details are given: no judgment is expressed." Now, if Confucius' passion for righteousness, which is undoubted, found no expression in this Classic, why must the absence of any religious expression be taken to indicate a lack of religious conviction? As against this conclusion we may put the intensely appreciative attitude of Confucius towards his ancient authorities, in which there is, as we have seen, a strong and noble religious strain. Moreover, one cannot read the Analects of Confucius without recognising in him a real reverence, and, if we grant his sincerity, a religious faith, very conscious no doubt of the limits of its knowledge. The decrees of Heaven were one of the subjects of which he did not speak, and it may have been reverence rather than scepticism that kept him from supplementing his record of facts with an interpretation of Providence.

In addition, however, to the silence of Confucius there are sayings of his which have an agnostic complexion. It is these, more than anything else, that led Professor Legge to conclude that Confucius "doubted more than he believed." But to doubt more than he believed of the supernatural beliefs of his day may be no proof of undue scepticism. It was a credulous age, rife with "irregular speculations," against which he felt it

necessary to warn his disciples. It may, therefore, have been a sound moral realism that led him to discourage any excess of interest in the unseen world as he seems to have done in his often quoted words, "If you cannot serve men how can you serve spirits?" and in his definition of wisdom: "Be earnest in your duties towards men: reverence spiritual beings but keep away from them." If we hesitate to adduce as a parallel the words of St John, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" we may at least remind ourselves that Bishop Warburton thought that the silence of Moses as to the after-life was due to a recoil from the excessive occupation of the Egyptians with it, and may, with greater reason, suggest that the reserve of Confucius was Warburtonian. In any case the phrase "irregular speculations" implies a recognised rule which can hardly have been other than the Classics, and the agnostic sayings, therefore, must not be taken as disallowing whatever beliefs that rule sanctions. Reserve as to spiritual beings or the life after death does not necessarily imply doubt of a personal, moral Governor of the world, such as Shang-ti is declared by the Classics to be. A Sadducee who believed neither angel nor spirit was not an atheist or even an agnostic.

There are times as we read the Analects when we would have liked more explicitness. One such is the occasion when, Confucius being ill, one of his disciples asked leave to pray for him, but Confucius replied, "My praying has been for a long time." Surely this need not mean, as someone has trans-

lated it, "My praying is an old business, long done with." The meaning I take to be that there was no need for special petitions now, since he had for long committed himself in well-doing to Heaven's keeping. We should have to know the nature of the special prayer suggested, "to the spirits of the upper and lower worlds," before finding fault with Confucius for his refusal of it.

What I have said of Confucius' alleged agnosticism may look like special pleading; but if the charge is not conclusively proved we may perhaps give him the benefit of the doubt, and do so all the more readily from a conviction that a merely negative attitude is hardly adequate to account for his immense influence. Let us see, then, if there is nothing more positive in his religious attitude.

The feature of his character which cannot but impress anyone who studies him is his moral earnestness. I am not now referring to the elevation of his moral teaching, wonderful as that is, but to his devotion to the moral task as he conceived it. Here was the master-passion of his life. Under its domination he scorned riches and ease, and would have laid down his life rather than be untrue to it. This needs no proof. What it is important to notice is that this moral devotion of his was inspired by a religious faith. The worshipper, we are told, always seeks "a helpful relation with higher powers." In his relation to Heaven Confucius found help. This is specially apparent in times of disappointment and danger. "Alas," he said, "there is no one that knows me": "but," he added, "I do not murmur against God. I do not grumble

against man. My studies lie low and my penetration lies high. But there is Heaven: Heaven knows me." More than once, when in danger, he strengthened himself by his faith that Heaven would protect him in the discharge of his mission. "After the death of King Wen was not wisdom lodged in me? If Heaven were to destroy this wisdom, future generations could not possess it. So long as Heaven does not destroy this wisdom, what can the people of K'uang do to me?" If we recognise genuine piety in Milton's words, "Man is immortal till his work is done," why should we not see it in Confucius also? This faith in Heaven which showed itself thus at special crises in his life was all through a controlling influence. It not only gave him courage, it inspired his sincerity. How, said he on one occasion, should I impose on Heaven? To Heaven he made his appeal when suspected of unworthy conduct: "Wherein I have acted improperly, may Heaven reject me! May Heaven reject me!" There is nothing so peculiar in his case as to preclude the inference that, however strictly the ritual worship of the Supreme was confined to the Emperor, Confucius would have acknowledged that Heaven was in this kind of direct moral *rapport* with every man; and this conscience of Heaven has in all ages been among the Chinese a force making for righteousness. A classical instance is that of one who, being tempted to evil by the suggestion that no one would know, replied to his tempter, "I know and you know and Heaven knows; how can you say that no one knows?"

This same sense of Heaven as vindicator of

morality underlies another saying of Confucius, "Man is born for uprightness. If a man lose his uprightness and yet live, his escape from death is the effect of mere good fortune." The meaning is that the moral governance of the world by Heaven is so searchingly righteous that the elimination of the bad man is what we might reasonably expect, and his not perishing out of the world an inexplicable mystery of Providence.

In this steady insistence on righteousness, the ultimate vindication of which is with Heaven, Confucius shows that he has grasped one important element in his religious heritage. He may claim to have revived or even intensified it. It is not, however, an innovation, and we may therefore regretfully agree with Legge's judgment that Confucius gave no impulse to religion, if by impulse be meant something new and creative. The regret is all the keener because the something new and creative seems to have lain so close to hand. If only his ethical fervour and his realistic temper had combined in a thorough-going criticism of the ancient religion, to "take forth the precious from the vile," then truly he might have been as God's mouth. As from our vantage ground we look back to the very full assimilation by Confucius of the strong ethical strain of the classical religion we may not unreasonably wonder that he did not definitely take a forward step in the development of an ethical monotheism. Such a development as can be traced in the Old Testament does not seem to have been impossible on Chinese soil, and there is one occasion on which Confucius seems to have been standing on its very threshold.

Kea, a great officer of the state of Wei, a sort of major-domo to the Prince, insinuated to Confucius that it would be for his advantage to pay court to him as minister rather than to his Prince. He did so by asking Confucius the meaning of the saying, "It is better to pay court to the furnace than to the south-west corner," or, as we might put it, "to the kitchen rather than to the hall." But the Master repelled the suggestion and lifted the matter out of the range of mere expediency. "Not so," he said, "he who sins against Heaven has none to whom he can pray." Christian preachers commonly use this saying to prove that in the teaching of Confucius there is no doctrine of forgiveness, whereas in Christian teaching there is a place for prayer even for sinners. This is a good homiletic use of the saying. But contextually, surely, the question is not at all one of the possibility of forgiveness. Even if it were, this saying of Confucius no more excludes forgiveness than the Psalmist does when he says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." But the point of the saying is rather this, that the spiritual world, in spite of its complexity, is so morally ordered that there is no possibility of playing off one spiritual being against another: certainly no possibility of playing off any spiritual being against the Supreme. Heaven is so supreme that to be out of a sound moral relation to Heaven is to be without any religious refuge. So, taken in what I believe to be its right sense, the saying is perhaps the most prophetic that we have from Confucius. It sharply contrasts the moral supremacy of one Being with

the relative insignificance of all others. It points clearly in the direction of an ethical monotheism. Moral accord with Thien being recognised as the sole thing that matters, other objects of religious regard might have fallen into desuetude. But religious evolution in this direction, though to us it seems the path which began under the very feet of Confucius as he uttered this saying, was not pursued by him. His prophetic insight was not equal to his opportunity. He was a prophet *manqué*.

This is not the only evidence of Confucius' lack of prophetic insight and force. There is another element in his heritage which also we wish Confucius had developed. Heaven as moral sanction he fully recognised and it is, of course, the prominent aspect of the Divine character in the Classics. But another aspect of the Divine activity is hinted at there as well. The Classics recognise Shang-ti as giver of their moral sense to mankind. They speak of his influence on individuals—princely individuals we admit—in words sufficiently clear to lead later commentators to expand them in a remarkable way. The classic text, for instance, says, "Heaven has granted to you, O young King, at last to become virtuous." On this text the comment reads, "Heaven secretly drew on his better nature." "In the matter of his thought it was as if Heaven awakened him: in the matter of his action as if Heaven helped him." From another passage we learn that there is a leading of God even for him who, refusing to yield to it, proves dissolute and dark, God, as we may say, finally giving him over to a reprobate mind. The

Divine effort to lead such a one is surely gracious. It also implies the possibility of the recovery of a right relation to God, even though forgiveness, or whatever else is implied in such a recovery, is not made explicit as it may be in Christian experience. Grace in the Christian revelation may be so gracious as to be unique; but if we take grace to be help spontaneously given by God for spiritual ends, have we not here at least some adumbration of it? Nor need we suppose that such Divine leadings and admonitions were confined to the most ancient times; and one is tempted to suggest that when Confucius said that at the age of sixty his ear was obedient, he meant obedience to such Divine admonitions rather than, as the phrase is usually explained, intuitive understanding of words addressed to his outward ear. However that may be, the meaning which later commentators found in the ancient texts should not have been beyond Confucius, and, coupled with the thought of Heaven as "the giver of their moral constitution to men and the helper of its harmonious development in their various conditions," might have led him to a belief in a vital relation between Heaven and men, in which moral light and leading is offered by God and is, therefore, to be sought and accepted by men, such as would have redeemed their moral achievement from the taint of self-sufficiency and made possible an experience of God as something more than the Moral Ruler of the world, the "Watcher of men." The very conception to be found in the Classics of the earthly sovereign as Heaven's shepherd with the function of morally leading his

people might have assisted Confucius to think in this direction, for Heaven's shepherd surely is not more solicitous of man's moral progress than Heaven itself. But Confucius does not seize and develop such hints in his authorities. It may be that he was kept back from any such grasp of a direct spiritual relation between God and the common man by the customary restriction of the worship of Shang-ti to the Sovereign. But if this is so, it only marks again his failure to rise to a prophetic level. What is tradition to prophetic insight but tow to the flame?

Confucius belonged to what has been called a prophetic era in the world's history. "During this epoch, from the 8th to the 6th century B.C., a wave of religious influence seemed to pass over peoples widely separated in space, and fresh spiritual impulses broke into life with far-reaching consequences." The succession of the great prophets of Israel began in the 8th century. Buddha and Confucius belong to the 6th. As we have seen, Confucius was conscious of a divine mission which certainly has had "far-reaching consequences." His life seemed to him to end in disappointment, but he accomplished more than he knew. His influence upon the Chinese race has been enormous. How are we to explain it? We must do him the justice to take seriously his account of his moral growth and gradual liberation from faults. His professed ignorance of the spiritual world was no pose. His indefatigable zeal in the study of the Yi King has something pathetic about it, as if he were still in old age seeking the ultimate secret of man's existence. His influence, therefore, is not

to be explained by his possession of the perfection and omniscience that later generations ascribed to him. Such ascription is due to the impression made on his disciples and is part of that which is to be explained. If then we ask what was the "fresh spiritual impulse" that broke into life through him, we can find no answer but that already indicated. It was the deep conviction of the moral sway of Heaven. This belief he found in the thoughts the ancients had handed down to him. It kindled itself afresh in Confucius and became his life's message by the proclamation of which he became what a sympathetic contemporary called him, "God's Bell," wakening men to righteousness. But, while republishing the message he received from the ancients, he failed to develop it as we can now see it might have been developed. He failed to emphasise the personality of that Being whose messenger he believed himself to be. By his use of the already prevalent term Thien he may even have helped unconsciously to bring the idea of the Divine down to that of an impersonal power making for righteousness. He failed also to develop what intimations he had in the Classics and in his own experience of a gracious relation between this righteous God and individual men. In reaction from the political disorder of his time he may have laid too much stress on the external and statutory side of his ideal, and so have tended to make the righteousness he sought a slavish bondage to an ancient tradition rather than a free response to a present God. All this, which may be said with some measure of justice, marks his failure. On the whole, therefore, while we acknowledge

him as a great moral teacher, we must deny him the title of prophet. If one were to hazard a Biblical parallel to his type of mind, Ezra perhaps might be suggested rather than Amos.

The failure of Confucius leaves room for the Chinese Church to take up that prophetic rôle which Confucius failed to fulfil, developing the old knowledge and linking on to it the new. We began by quoting Professor Giles as suggesting a religious reform in China by which the Chinese shall be called back to their ancient faith "with the stirring battle-cry, There is no God but God and Confucius is His Prophet." We cannot so far shut our eyes to the evolution of religion as to be content now either with what Giles too generously calls, "the unitarian worship" of Heaven or with Confucius as its prophet. When the sun has risen, the stars pale their ineffectual fires. Jesus Christ has come. The prophetic rôle in which Confucius failed devolves on Christ's disciples. The Chinese Christians may say to their fellow countrymen, "Him whom our fathers worshipped not altogether ignorantly, we now declare to you, righteous with a higher righteousness, gracious with a deeper grace than they could conceive." Here is a revelation that confirms, corrects and crowns all that they knew of the Most High. The democratic and critical spirit of the age makes it more easy than ever before for the Church in China to exercise its prophetic calling, to proclaim to every one a direct access to God without seeming to encroach on an Imperial prerogative, and to supplement the teaching of Confucius without having its mouth stopped by the charge of irreverence towards the Sage.

CHAPTER II

Confucian Morality

The Chinese may well boast, as missionaries to China have often boasted on their behalf, of the wonderfully sound morality of Confucius and his School. A School which can teach us to "love others as we love ourselves and to blame ourselves as we blame others" would be a glory to any country. Though this wholly admirable maxim did not issue from the Confucian mint till more than one thousand years after the death of Confucius, it is a legitimate coinage of his School, and it would not be difficult to put along side of it other maxims from the same source not unworthy of such a place. Anything like a detailed exposition of Confucian morality, however, is beyond my scope. All that I aim at, and it is more than I shall adequately accomplish, is to give a sketch of the earlier Confucian teaching as we have it in "The Four Books"—The Analects of Confucius, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, and Mencius—emphasising those points which are of most interest from the Christian point of view.

Though fragments of the teaching of Confucius can be found in the Book of Rites or in the Family Sayings, we get at that teaching best in that book on which for English readers Professor Legge's

authority has stamped the title "Analects." The title is an apt one. The book is occupied chiefly with the sayings of Confucius, given often without any context, with the introductory phrase "The Master said." The Sayings are as lacking in systematic arrangement as are the maxims in the Book of Proverbs. There would be great interest in a comparison of the Confucian and the Hebrew wisdom in these two books, not only as to the details of moral conduct, but in certain broader aspects, their religious basis, their reference to women or their political outlook: but such a comparison would take us too far afield. In morals as in religion Confucius based himself on tradition. In particular the ancient emperors were his moral exemplars. In a final estimate, therefore, of the magnitude of Confucius as a moral teacher it would be necessary to inquire how much of moral wisdom came down to him and how much he modified what he received by emphasis or supplement or correction derived from his own moral insight. But for our present purpose we need not attempt any such analysis. We take the Analects as giving us the teaching of Confucius whether original or derived. We should note that what we have in the Analects is not the lectures of a philosopher nor even such lecture notes as perhaps we have in Aristotle's "Ethics," but the occasional sayings of the Master. In some cases he wisely adapted his teaching to the character of the student he was addressing. One who was slow was urged to carry immediately into practice what he had heard, while another who had more than his share of energy was advised to

consult with his father and brothers. No doubt there were similar personal reasons at work when to the inquiry independently put to Confucius by three of his disciples: What is perfect virtue? he returned such different replies as "To put away selfishness"; "Reverence and Reciprocity"; "Caution in speaking." If we wonder at this last reply we may recall St James' dictum: "If any man stumbleth not in word the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also." With this occasional nature of his teaching in mind, we will not expect a systematic treatment by Confucius of any topic, or take any saying as a perfectly rounded and balanced statement of his mind about it.

It is easy enough to quote from the Analects maxims and moral characterisations which are most admirable. As illustrating the height to which Confucius rises in his ethical teaching, we have, as is well known, the Golden Rule, though in a negative form: "Not to do to others what you would not wish done to yourself," a rule which, in answer to a request for one word which might serve as a universal maxim, Confucius summed up in the word Reciprocity. In the Great Learning this negative Golden Rule is given in a number of particulars: "What a man dislikes in his superiors let him not display in his treatment of his inferiors," and so on, and is there called the Principle with which, as with a measuring square, to regulate one's conduct. There is another saying of Confucius, recorded in the "Doctrine of the Mean," which only needs to be generalised to give us the Golden Rule in its positive form. The particular statement of it which Con-

fucius gives us is: "I would serve my father as I would require my son to serve me." In still another saying: "To be able to judge of others by what is nigh in ourselves" we recognise the same moral insight. After such admirable general principles, to quote particular maxims for your approval would be easy enough but superfluous. In fairness, however, over against such teaching to which no exception can be taken must be put other sayings not so admirable. There is, for instance, the memorable criticism which Confucius made on the saying attributed to Laotsze, that injury should be recompensed with kindness. "With what then," said he, "will you recompense kindness? Recompense injury with justice, and kindness with kindness." With this we may take from the Book of Rites his sanction of revenge, no doubt in the extreme case of the murder of a father. Legge also comments severely on his breaking of an enforced oath, his excusing himself on the plea of sickness from seeing an unwelcome visitor, and his commendation of the modesty of a brave officer who after covering the retreat of his troops concealed his valour by whipping up his horse as he entered the city gate and alleging its lack of speed as the reason of his being in the rear. No doubt these instances show that Confucius, though he inculcated faithfulness and sincerity as first principles, took the less rigid view in certain casuistical questions; but others beside Confucianists may feel that Legge presses too heavily.

As a teacher he was delighted when any one of his scholars showed himself quick of apprehension,

and indeed he declined to teach anyone who, as he put it, could not from one corner of a subject learn the other three. But how far he really appreciated independent moral judgment is doubtful. On one occasion a scholar argued, sensibly enough we might think, for the reduction of the period of mourning for a parent from three years to one. Confucius met him with the argument that the three years of mourning for a parent's death corresponded to the three years of infantile dependency ; and then, as if recognising that the argument was not quite convincing, he added: " Let him do as his feelings permit, but the three years' period is universally observed in the Empire." One is reminded of the way in which St Paul cut short an argument on the veiling of women by the assertion: " We have no such custom nor the Churches of God." Another trait is common to Confucius and St Paul. Both of them practised on their authorities the kind of exegesis which it is usual to call Rabbinic. Thus, if St Paul found directions as to the support of the Christian ministry in the humane injunction of the law regarding oxen, Confucius from the description of a lady's beauty drew support for his view of the place of ceremonies in education. St Paul, however, stood for the independence of moral insight much more than Confucius did, and Confucius was much more of a traditionalist and ritualist than St Paul was. There is nothing in the Analects so liberating as St Paul's twin sayings: " Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind " and " Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." What comes nearest to them is the saying which may

mean, as Soothill translates it: "He upon whom a moral duty devolves should not give way even to his master." Nor, in spite of the shaving of his head in Cenchreæ can we imagine the apostle in any one of his journeys practising ceremonies with Silas and Timothy under a tree or discussing the questions of Etiquette in which Confucius, according to the Book of Rites, was so interested."

But with all his pedantry there was in Confucius—and it is, as we have seen, his outstanding characteristic—an unwavering conviction of the supremacy of virtue. It is to be clung to constantly even in times of danger. To see what is right and not to do it is cowardice. Riches and honour acquired by unrighteousness are a floating cloud. Righteousness is more to man than fire and water. Even life itself should be sacrificed to preserve one's virtue. Confucius' delineation of the moral ideal may be faulty, but the absoluteness of its imperative is fully acknowledged. Had Confucius been more of a speculative philosopher he might have asked himself, as we may wish to ask him, whether the Virtue to which life itself is sacrificed does not demand the glory of "going on and still to be" in a personal will apart from which we know no virtue at all. But this form of the issue of life after death had not risen above his horizon, though it may rightly occur to us.

The technical question of free-will was, as one might expect, equally non-existent for Confucius. One saying might seem to assert freedom in its fullest extent. "The commander of the forces

may be carried off, but the will of even a common man cannot be taken from him." On this saying—which has a welcome democratic sound—Legge's comment is "The will unsubduable," and we might take it as meaning unsubduable by outward constraint or inward solicitation. The parallel with the commander of the forces suggests the will as commander-in-chief of all the powers of a man's inner life. Confucius, however, was fully aware of the paradox of the moral life, its ever impossible possibility. On the one hand, "man is born for uprightness." Virtue is always possible. "Is virtue a thing remote? I wish to be virtuous, and lo, virtue is at hand"; "If the will be set on virtue, there will be no practice of wickedness." On the other hand, virtue is never easy of achievement. It is thwarted by passion. "I have not seen one who loves virtue as he loves sensual pleasure," said Confucius, and, even more positively, "I have not seen a person who loved virtue or who hated what was not virtuous. He who loved virtue would esteem nothing above it." In his empirical way, looking on men as they are, he distinguished a class of men so stupid that they cannot be changed. But even to earnest and intelligent souls, virtue is not a light task. It involves "the subduing of one's self." One of Confucius' disciples said: "The burden is heavy and the course is long. Perfect Virtue is the burden, is it not heavy? Only with death does the course stop, is it not long?" For the moral life throughout its course there is need of constant solicitude. Confucius, in this at least like Socrates, had no use for the uncritical

life. "When a man is not in the habit of saying, What shall I think of this? What shall I think of this? I can indeed do nothing with him."

As to the criterion of virtue, there are indications of the theory that virtue is the mean between two extremes, as when the Master said of two of his disciples, "Sze exceeds, Shang falls short," and added, "To go beyond is as wrong as to fall short," or complains that he cannot get men who pursue the due medium, to whom therefore he might communicate his instructions. This theory is even more explicit in the saying, "Perfect is the virtue which is according to the Constant Mean," and in the whole section of the book called by Legge "The Doctrine of the Mean," from which this quotation is taken. The theory, however, is neither argumentatively developed, nor illustrated, as it is in the "Nicomachean Ethics," by the cases of particular virtues. Whatever the criterion by which Virtue is to be recognised, recognition, as Confucius pointed out, is not the same as submission: assent is to be distinguished from obedience. Hence there is a quite noticeable emphasis on sincerity as the foundation of a moral life. To think of Confucian morality as merely formal and external is quite a mistake. All functions must be accompanied with their appropriate feelings; for instance, merely to nourish one's parents is not filial piety, for, "even one's dogs and horses all get their food"; and the performance of ceremonies is nought without reverence. It may be that Christ alone asserted the moral equivalence of permitted thought and committed deed, but other moralists, and Confucius

among them, at least condemn the permitted thought. The whole design of the Odes, he said, is "to have no depraved thoughts," thoughts that decline from the norm. The inwardness of morality is also recognised in the distinction made between fear of punishment and the sense of shame as motives by which men are led to conform to what is right. Outwardly the conduct may be the same in both cases, but its moral value is different.

The general impression one gets from the Analects is that the moral life is one of strenuousness rather than of zest. But the latter note is struck in the very first chapter, and it is clearly recognised that virtue is a thing to be loved and is not fully worthy the name unless it is itself the spring of joy. "They who know the truth are not equal to those who love it, and they who love it are not equal to those who delight in it." Nor is the moral life perfect unless it is crowned with a grace of manner acquired from Music and the rules of Propriety. When the accomplishments and the solid qualities are equally blended then we have the man of complete virtue. It is a mistake to despise the ornamental accomplishments. They may be compared to the hair by which a beautiful hide is distinguished from one that is common. Stripped of their hair the skin of a tiger is no better than the skin of a dog. The ideal man, therefore, is the accomplished gentleman, ὁ καλοκἀγαθός. Of course, the gentleman does not seek to become such for himself alone. Virtue is always communicative. The man of perfect virtue wishing to be established himself seeks also to establish others.

He has social obligations and must not be a recluse. If he cultivates himself in reverential carefulness it is that as his ultimate objective he may give rest to all the people.

In these days of democracy in China, exception has been taken to the teaching of Confucius as being conservative and imperialistic. There is some truth in both counts. His look is certainly backward rather than forward, to an ideal already departed from rather than to the consummation of a development already begun. The emphasis laid on filial piety is sometimes brought forward as explaining this conservatism. But too much must not be made of this point. Twice over, indeed, it is recorded that Confucius said that if a son for three years after his father's death does not alter from his father's way, it is then that he may be called filial. This, no doubt, weights the scale against innovation. Yet, even we, without being bigots in conservatism, sometimes blame the indecent haste with which a son upsets his father's plans ; and on his side Confucius was not blind to the fact that a son may see more clearly than his father, and since he permitted a son to remonstrate with his father while alive he could hardly bind a son to all the ways of his father now dead. On the whole, in the Analects filial piety is not so prominent as one coming to them with our popular notions of Chinese morality might expect. Legge's saying that the Chinese have almost made a religion of filial piety is founded not so much on the Analects as on other records of the teaching of Confucius, in the Book of Rites, for instance.

There, in all moral deliberation on one's conduct, the thought of one's parents takes the place which we would give to the thought of God. Any wrong act, even such as we would never think of in this connection, is reckoned as an offence against filial piety, such an act, for instance, as the untimely killing of an animal or felling of a tree. Filial piety thus becomes all-inclusive, and, in favour of this position, it may be contended that, while no doubt the ultimate and more awful sanction remains with Heaven, yet filial piety yields a warmer motive to all morality. The obvious weakness of the contention is that whatever we may say of filial piety in general, it is unfortunately not true of all parents that the thought of pleasing them or acting worthily of them would be a great moral incentive. Still, for the Confucianist, with his cold and remote Heaven, we may admit some truth in the contention, while we point out that the Christian conception of God unites in one both the tenderness and the awe. "If ye call on him as Father who without respect of persons renders to every man according to his work, pass the time of your sojourning here with fear"; and again, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

The charge of Imperialism is less well-founded, at least if it is meant to justify the critic in discarding the whole Confucian morality. Every teacher speaks to his time and in the terms of his time. But the monarchical phrases of Old Testament piety do not cause acute difficulty even to a Republican Christian, and the New Testament is not discarded in democracies because the divine right of Kings has a plausible basis there. So too the

essential Confucian morality could be disengaged without great loss from its political references. It would be absurd to call him a thorough-going democrat who said : " The people may be made to follow a path of action, but they may not be made to understand it." But Confucius did not despise the ordinary man. His teaching was open to all. He had a genuine respect for youth, with all its possibilities. He admitted the right and, therefore, the duty of remonstrance with rulers, and allowed no indefectible right to rule in any dynasty. In this matter Mencius was even more explicit than Confucius. He was indeed so outspoken that one finds a scholar like Dr Faber count it a blot on Confucianism that it encourages revolt, a criticism which one may set, not without some amusement, over against the charge of Imperialism. For Confucius the ideal of government was not tyranny, but a beneficent domination through a moral influence by which the people would be swayed as grass by the wind. There may be exaggeration in this theory of influence, but it is a useful complement to our over-emphasis in social matters on learning and legislation; and even in the religious life, and in theology as the science of that life, moral influence, which is something more than example, may with advantage supplement or even displace impersonal transactions. It is a mark of his prevailing sobriety of thought that Confucius demanded time for such influence to work. Is it the presence of this sobriety or is it rather the absence of something—of some quality in Confucius himself or of some factor in his thinking—that withheld him, in spite of

all his moral earnestness and his sense of a Divine mission, from rising to anything like the assured optimism of the New Testament?

Turning now to Mencius, second to Confucius alone in the Confucian School, we find the same lofty ethical note. "I like bears' paws and I like fish. If I cannot have both, I choose bears' paws. I love life and I love righteousness. If I cannot have both, I choose righteousness." There we have a lively and memorable expression of the supremacy of righteousness. It would be superfluous, however, to quote examples of his teaching, however much one is tempted to do so. His opinions have come down to us more in conversations and discussions, and less in disconnected utterances, than those of Confucius, and are put forth with great dialectical skill and illustrative ingenuity. We limit our references to that in which he shows a marked advance beyond the earlier teaching—the psychological grounding of his ethics. Man is born for uprightness, says Confucius, and Mencius works out the idea of the natural goodness of man. Here, we are told by Professor Giles, we have one great obstacle to the progress of Christianity in China. But Christianity, on the one hand, is not so wedded to an extreme doctrine of total depravity, nor, on the other, is the doctrine of Mencius so unqualifiedly optimistic, as Professor Giles seems to think.[1] Leaving the Christian doctrine alone meanwhile, let us see what the doctrine of Mencius really is; what he says about goodness, in what sense it is natural, how

[1] See below, pp. 117-121.

far it is a hardly-won achievement. We shall scarcely find in it anything that would prevent a man from being a Christian—unless he claim to be a Sage. Goodness, says Mencius in reply to an opponent, is not to human nature as cups and bowls are to a willow-tree, artificial and only possible by the mutilation of the original. Nor is human nature indifferently good or bad as water will indifferently flow east or west. Human nature tends to goodness as water tends to flow down, though it may be forced to spring up. All this is, however, mere illustration. What are the psychological facts? Observation shows, says Mencius, that the feeling of commiseration is essential to man, and the feelings of shame and dislike, of modesty and complaisance, of approving and disapproving, and in these feelings we have the principles of benevolence and righteousness and propriety and moral knowledge. These four principles are as natural to men as their four limbs, and for a man to say that he cannot develop them is to play the thief with himself. Mencius, quite as much as Butler, is aware of the ambiguity of the word 'nature.' There are, he says, the desires for the pleasures of sense. These are natural. But, he adds: "There is the appointment of Heaven in connection with them, and the superior man does not say of his pursuit of them, 'It is my nature.'" It is, then, the whole nature duly ordered that is good. There is a nobler part in man's constitution and an inferior part. "Let a man stand fast in the supremacy of the nobler part of his constitution and the inferior part will not be able to take it from

him." In order to have a complete view of Mencius' doctrine of human nature we must take account of what he calls "the passion nature." The description of it is not free from difficulty, and to say that "being nourished with righteousness and sustaining no injury it fills up all between heaven and earth" is, as Legge says, "one of those heroic expressions which fill the ear but do not inform the mind." One could perhaps attach a fairly good psychological meaning to it if it were permissible to take heaven and earth as metaphors for the spiritual and sensual elements in human nature. At any rate, "the passion nature" seems to correspond to Plato's τὸ θυμοειδές, which is by him distinguished from the concupiscent and rational elements of the human soul as a third natural principle auxiliary to the rational. For Mencius, too, the passion nature is, in its idea, "the mate and assistant of righteousness and reason." It actually becomes so, not by a man's direct management of it, but by his persistence in the way of righteousness ; and, just because righteousness is not external and merely incidental to human nature, this process is as natural and inevitable as is the growth of corn, which cannot be helped to grow long, as the foolish man of Sung thought, by the direct process of pulling it up. A man's nature is starved unless its passion element is thus developed. It must neither be repressed nor interfered with. So Mencius says : "Maintain firm the will (i.e., the practical reason) and do no violence to the passion nature." Perhaps "to fill up heaven and earth" means that when it has so developed it

makes a man adequate to meet all the changes and chances of his mortal days, as he lives covered by the heavens and treading the earth. It is important to observe that the goodness of human nature which Mencius affirms is, to begin with, potential rather than actual. "Men possess a moral nature; but if they are well fed, warmly clad and comfortably lodged, without being taught at the same time, they become almost like the beasts." It is by thinking that a true sense of values can be attained, and the superior be discriminated from the inferior. If excellence in so small an art as chess-playing demands that the whole mind be given to it, how much more the art of the moral life? The great end of learning is to recover the lost mind, and to have lost their mind is at least the common condition of men. Alas, says Mencius, men will seek a lost hen or a lost dog, but "they lose their mind and do not know to seek for it." This mind that can be lost may be identified with the child-heart which only the great man keeps, "the little more" by which the nature of man is distinguished from that of the lower animals. The earnest search after righteousness is prompted and aided by Providence. Men are distressed in their minds and perplexed in their thoughts until they arise to vigorous reformation. Heaven exercises them with suffering and the baffling of their plans that their minds may be stimulated and their natures hardened. Life springs from sorrow and calamity, and death from ease and pleasure. But, of course, this Providential discipline must be seconded by self-discipline. One of

the best known of the many illustrations used by Mencius is that of the mountain once covered with beautiful grass and foliage. But the trees were hewn down by the people of the neighbourhood, and their cattle and goats browsed on the herbage, until, in spite of the constant springing of vegetable life and the nourishing influence of rain and dew, the mountain, once beautiful by nature, was bare and stripped. So is it with the nature of man robbed of its natural beauty by the attrition of daily life, though it still has aspirations after goodness, and in the calm air of the morning just between night and day feels in some degree those desires and aversions which are proper to humanity. Here we have a pre-Christian plea for the Morning Watch, the need of quiet meditation on moral values, if " shoots " of goodness are to grow. Nor must such mental cultivation be ever intermitted. Footpaths on the hills if used may become roads; not used, the wild grass fills them up. Alas for the man whose mind the wild grass fills up! To Mencius, as to Socrates, man's inward monitor is prohibitive rather than directive. Looking up to have no occasion for shame before Heaven, and below to have no occasion to blush before men—this is one of the delights of the superior man. Among men, to be a duke or a lord is reckoned as nobility; but benevolence, righteousness, devotion, fidelity, with unwearied joy in these virtues—this is the nobility of Heaven; and all men have in themselves what is truly honourable. In virtue of this anyone may claim to be of the same kind as the sages. Lofty as is the issue of virtue, its beginnings are in familiar things.

Children instinctively love their parents and look up to their elder brothers, and there we have the beginnings of benevolence and righteousness. All that is needed for a perfect character is to extend their range, making it all-embracing. The course of the ancient Sage Emperors, Yao and Shun, was simply that of filial piety and fraternal duty. True virtue is most potent in its influence, though even the influence of a sage may not last more than five generations. Failure to influence others is, therefore, a call to self-examination. If it is true that one deed of violence provokes another and yet another in a terrible sequence, it is also true that benevolence subdues its opposite just as water subdues fire. What, however, is to be said of those who will with one cupful of water seek to extinguish the blaze of a whole waggon-load of wood and then say that water cannot subdue fire? This sort of thing, says Mencius, only encourages those who are not benevolent. One thinks of the charge that Christianity has failed to overcome the evils of the world, and of the rejoinder that it has not failed but has never been adequately tried.

Even from such a slight sketch as this it is easy to see how rich a treasure of ethical teaching is to be found in Confucius and Mencius, which the Christian preacher can appropriate, and on the basis of which he can make his appeal in the way both of conviction and of instruction in righteousness, as he goes on to exhibit the still richer treasures of grace and truth in Jesus Christ. Only there is, I think, the danger also that what is appropriated may, just because it is so good, remain, even in the

Christian context, an unassimilated block of Confucian morals, so that the life of the believer is not wholly ruled by faith, and he is a Christian in religion, a Confucian in morals—piebald. But, as ancient ritual teaches us, a victim to be acceptable must be not piebald but of one colour.

One aspect of Confucian ethics remains to be mentioned if we are to exhaust, not the subject, indeed, but what we have here to say on it. We have seen that Confucius spoke of man as born for uprightness, and that Mencius further elaborated the doctrine of the goodness of man's nature. But man is a part of the whole system of things. What are his relations to it? Is he just one part among many, having no pre-eminence over them, or is he so related organically to them that they without him cannot be made perfect? It is this implication of man and nature that is our final topic, and it is brought before us in a very interesting way in the book that is called the "Doctrine of the Mean."

This Book is ascribed to Confucius' grandson, Tsze-su, who lived about 400 B.C. The key-word of the book, at least in its treatment of this topic, is translated by Legge 'sincerity,' and the key-passage runs as follows: "It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under Heaven who can give its full development to his nature. Able to give its full development to his own nature, he can do the same to the nature of other men, and so to the nature of animals and things. Thus he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of heaven and earth, and may with heaven and earth form a ternion." The

language is startling, and Dr Legge is moved by it to vehement condemnation. The teaching of the book, he says, is a mixture of sense and mysticism; it is blasphemous, eminently absurd; the sincerity of which so much is said is a figment; and if there is in the book "ordinary" and "plain" teaching as to the path of duty, the reader is also at times suddenly confronted by what is extraordinary and vague; "from the path of duty where we tread on solid ground, the writer suddenly raises us aloft on wings of air." So far Dr Legge, who, I dare say, might have criticised as "a mixture of sense and mysticism," Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty," in which the poet, before calling that "awful power" to the humbler functions of guiding and strengthening him, has raised us aloft by words like these:

> "Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
> And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong."

But after all a man's recognition of duty is itself a most mysterious fact. Religious men have spoken of it as the voice of God, and philosophers have held that here at least man is in touch with the ultimate reality. We need not wonder, therefore, that any serious thinking on man's nature should give rise to thoughts that are extraordinary and mystical.

What then is this "sincerity"? It is, I think, being true to one's essence, realisation of one's essential being. Sincerity, simplicity, purity, singleness, these terms, which are all used by the author

of the "Doctrine of the Mean," refer to the same thing, viz., being only and altogether one's true self. In this sense of the word, to us Christian people the only sincere man, the only man who at every moment was realising in himself the truth of human nature, is the man Christ Jesus. Does it, then, strike us as absurd to affirm an organic relation, with most far-reaching consequences, between Jesus Christ and the whole system of things? But we must not anticipate. Tsze-su knew nothing of Jesus. What he had before him was the thought of the ideal man, the man who is truly man. What then does he say of the relation of this ideal person to history and to nature? With regard to the former we read: "It is characteristic of the most entire sincerity to be able to foreknow. When a nation or family is about to flourish there are sure to be happy omens; and when it is about to perish there are sure to be unlucky omens. Such events are seen in the milfoil and tortoise, and affect the movements of the four limbs. When calamity or happiness is about to come, the good shall certainly be foreknown to him and the evil also. Therefore, the individual possessed of the most complete sincerity is like a spirit." No doubt there is here what seems absurd enough, and it is easy to pooh-pooh the foreknowledge attributed to the sage as "only a guessing by means of augury, sorcery and other follies." But though these adjuncts are childish the main idea is far from ridiculous. That the burden with which time is big should be supposed to be indicated to the ideal man by the milfoil and tortoise is due to the stage of enlightenment at which

Tsze-su had arrived; but his idea that insight into history is in proportion to the completeness of a man's humanity is surely in no way ridiculous. If of the Old Testament prophets it can be said that they were "the foremost men in Israel, the most richly-endowed moralists, poets and statesmen, the flower of the nation," was not Tsze-su on the right lines when he said: "It is characteristic of the most entire sincerity (i.e., the most perfectly-realised nature) to be able to foreknow," to detect in the present its future issues.

Tsze-su affirms also such a relation between man and the world of things that the man who has perfectly realised his own nature has perfect knowledge of the nature of all things. Thus there is harmony between inner and outer, the self and the not-self. The perfect man is at home in a perfectly intelligible world. This position, too, may be mystical, but it is not absurd. It is in a way the converse to Tennyson's as he apostrophises the flower in the crannied wall. Could he but know that, he would "know what God and man is." Here, conversely, the sage who has completely realised his own nature is able to comprehend the nature of all other things.

The relation between the perfect man and the external world is, moreover, not one of knowing only. It is said also of him that he gives "its development to the nature of other men" and that he "exhausts the nature of all things," by which somewhat awkwardly-sounding phrase is meant that he secures their complete development. Now these results on men and things are brought about

by the perfect man partly, no doubt, as Chu Hsi says, by his "knowing them completely and dealing with them correctly," but partly also by the silent and unconscious influence of his ideal nature. As "the Master said, 'Among the appliances to transform the people sounds and appearances are but trivial influences. The doings of the Supreme Heaven have neither sound nor smell. That is perfect virtue.'"

To sum up, then, the leading ideas of "The Doctrine of the Mean" on this topic, what we have is this: For man there is possible the complete realisation of his nature, so that he is true man. To him who has attained this state of perfect truth, fact coinciding with idea, the world becomes transparent as to its meaning, and history discloses beforehand its development. Such a perfect man is qualified to bring all men and things to their perfection, both by his consciously directed action and by his whole influence, so that he works together with Heaven and Earth, carrying the purpose of creation to completion.

I have already hinted at the Christian analogue to such a conception as this. This was pointed out by the early Jesuit editors of "The Doctrine of the Mean," who remark that its author seemed to have learned by prolonged contemplation of the facts before him that this world cannot be restored to its native integrity and order unless first man by victory over himself shall have recovered the integrity and order which he had lost. Something of the same kind occurred independently to Dr Legge, in spite of his rather unsympathetic attitude.

Certainly in Old Testament prophecy of the Messianic age, and in New Testament reflection on the place of Jesus Christ and on the liberation of nature at the revealing of the sons of God, there is something to which this old time Chinese speculation is analogous. According to the Biblical view man is, *de jure*, the head of creation, but, *de facto*, we see not yet all things subject to him; only, as the earnest of that consummation, we see Jesus because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour; and if the New Testament writer speaks of Him thus, as made perfect through suffering, we may recall that deep saying of Mencius that when Heaven "is about to confer a great office on any man, it first exercises his mind with suffering." I do not adduce these things as equivalents of the Christian ideas but as analogies which the Christian preacher may find useful. There is, however, one point at which the analogy quite fails. Of the ideal man who brings men and things to perfection the Chinese philosopher asks: "Shall this individual have any being or anything beyond himself on which he depends?" But, according to the Hebrew prophet, the great Biblical figure is only ideal man because of his perfect filial relation to God, "drawing his breath in the fear of the Lord." The difference is a deep one. Yet in spite of this there is a strain common to the Confucian and the Biblical teaching. The Confucian teaching gives us a moral teleology for the world, which implies its moral constitution. It affirms the moral community of man and nature, and the dependence of nature on man. It sketches an ideal person, who may be called the Head of

Creation, since it is through his influence alone that individual men and human society and the world of nature reach their completion. In all this it presents the Christian apologist with some of those implicates which underlie the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. It even gives us a sort of doctrine of redemption, in so far as it recognises that the world of men and things is not yet what, under the influence of the sage, it might become. So far the Christian is at one with the Confucianist. Where issue is joined between them is on the question whether and where the ideal has been realised. "How great is the path proper to the Sage!" "It waits for the proper man and then it is trodden." "Only by perfect virtue can the perfect path be made a fact." Dr Legge declines to entertain the suggestion that there is here a prophecy of the Saviour. In one sense we must all agree with him. But is it not also true to say that every unrealised ideal is a prophecy of Him in whom every ideal is realised? The picture of the Ideal Man and his influence reveals the reach of Chinese aspirations. We would not quarrel with the mystical majesty and grandeur with which the throne of the Ideal Man is invested. We quarrel only with the fiction that tries so to deck out the figure of Confucius as to fit it for that throne. Thus the good which we gladly recognise is set in opposition to the Best, whose alone is the right to reign. In this quarrel the facts are with us. The historic Confucius is simply not comparable with the historic Jesus. So much is obvious to the inspection of all; while to us who have but touched

the hem of His garment there has already come from the living Jesus an experience, however attenuated by our faithlessness, of that "working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself."

CHAPTER III

Taoism

Of the three schools of Chinese thought, Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist, the Taoist claims to share with the Confucian the honour of being of native origin. This claim is based on the traditional belief in the existence of Lao-tsze as an elder contemporary of Confucius and in his authorship of the Taoist Classic, the Tao Teh King. This belief has been all but universally accepted by Chinese scholars, but it has been questioned by some Western students of things Chinese. Under the handling of the more radical of these critics Lao-tsze —a designation that, happily for their theory, is in form either singular or plural—ceases to be an individual, 'the old Philosopher,' and becomes a number of old philosophers, and the book that was attributed to him becomes a patchwork of ancient sayings put together and padded out by some unknown forger of an age long subsequent to Confucius. A less drastic criticism, while taking much the same view of the book, permits Lao-tsze to have lived as an individual man, and even to have been the author of some of the sayings which the book preserves. In either form the criticism is too arbitrary and subjective to be convincing. As against it is Dr Legge's opinion that there is no

other book of so ancient a date as the Tao Teh King of which the authenticity of the origin and genuineness of the text can claim to be so well substantiated. (*Sac. Books of the East*, xxxix, pp. 4-9.) There are still other critics who, while leaving the book to Lao-tsze, would take from him the greater glory of being the originator of Taoism, which, they affirm, existed long before his time. Professor Parker, who denies that Lao-tsze was the first Taoist, is certainly right in saying that the literary combination Tao Teh did not originate with him. But when he goes on to say that practically every thought in the Tao Teh King has been foreshadowed, usually word for word, in other more ancient works, it may be questioned whether he is not going beyond his evidence. Sayings found in these ancient books reflect perhaps what may be called the Taoist temper; but it is probably safe to say that not one of them implies the existence of the Taoist philosophy. A really critical edition of the Tao Teh King in which such matters would be examined is not yet to be found in English.

It is time, however, to remind ourselves that these critical questions are, happily, not of prime importance for our discussion. We start from the plain fact that we have in our hands a book containing a definite line of thought on the ultimate problems of human life. The Chinese ascribe it to Lao-tsze. Him they look on as one of their Masters, and they claim the teaching of the book ascribed to him as the native product of their race. The ascription and the claim may be well founded or not. In either case the worth of the teaching and its relation

to the Christian faith remains the same. It is this worth and this relation that are our subject.

If, with this subject in our minds, we read through the Tao Teh King, our attention may very naturally fix itself on certain of its sayings which have a Christian ring about them. Taken at their face value they are certainly remarkable. To come at once to the most famous of them, "Repay injury with kindness," might well be the utterance of a Christian moralist. There are other sayings also with which the Christian reader will find himself in accord, such as these: "The highest goodness is like water: water is good for advantaging all things, and it does not strive: it takes the place that all men hate." "I have three precious things which I hold and count precious. The first is gentleness. The second is moderation. The third is not daring to take the first place under heaven." "He who overcomes men has force; he who overcomes himself is strong." This last may remind us of the Old Testament saying, "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city"; and there are others in a similar key, wholesome and with a certain shrewdness, not so distinctively Christian as that "Repay injury with kindness" but still not altogether aliens in a Christian climate. "If we handle after sharpening, we cannot long preserve the sharpness"; "He who raises himself on tiptoe cannot stand firm: he who straddles cannot walk"; "He who regards many things as easy will encounter many difficulties." But when on the outlook for Christian affinities we have made our little anthology of sayings from the Tao Teh

King, we must not allow ourselves to be deceived by it. If we would rightly appraise the Taoist maxims we must interpret them in the Taoist context; for sayings get their meaning from their context as colours get their value from the light that falls on them. What by daylight is pink may in gaslight seem grey; and a maxim legitimate or even admirable in the light of the Cross may be something less praiseworthy in the light of Tao. We cannot safely interpret any part of the Tao Teh King unless we understand Tao, for if the Classic has a central unifying principle it is Tao. To its elucidation we must now address ourselves.

Tao is not a term peculiar to Taoist writings. It occurs constantly in Chinese literature, both before Lao-tsze's date and after, and in a variety of meanings—a path, to speak, rational principle, a way, i.e., a teaching by which men should regulate their "conversation," or, again, a way or customary manner of acting. These and other uses of the term Tao can be found in Chinese writings of all schools, and some of them in the Tao Teh King itself. What is peculiar to writers of the Taoist School is the use of Tao as the name of that which is the ultimate explanation of the universe. With them Tao is a metaphysical principle. It is because this use of the word Tao is not found in any writing anterior to the Tao Teh King that one is sceptical of the existence of Professor Parker's Taoism before Lao-tsze. What then is Tao as metaphysical principle? To know that is to have the key to the interpretation of the Tao Teh King. After we have done our best with the book, obscurities, and perhaps

inconsistencies, may remain unsolved, but these need not greatly trouble us if only we can discern the main features of its central principle. To the reader of the Tao Teh King two points at least seem clear. Firstly, in relation to the universe of things, Tao is that by which all things come to fulfil the law of their being; and secondly, of what Tao is in itself nothing can be said. Putting these two statements together we may infer this definition: Tao is unqualified Being, plus productive spontaneity. We might not inaccurately describe it, as Spencer described his ultimate, as an "infinite and eternal energy manifested alike within us and without us," to which "we must ascribe not only the manifestations themselves, but the law of their order." But as we may seem to have arrived at this description rather *per saltum*, it may be as well to substantiate its accuracy by evidence from the Tao Teh King itself.

Here then is a summary of what the Tao Teh King tells us: There is that which chaotically existed before heaven and earth, that is to say, there was an undifferentiated something before this differentiated world: it cannot be heard, seen or grasped, that is, it is devoid of all sensible qualities: it is nameless, beyond all predication: it can hardly be spoken of even as 'one': since nothing can be said of it, it is indeed rather Non-existence than Existence: since, however, all things come from it, it may be called 'Mother': it is spontaneous, subject to no law but itself: formless itself, it is the source of all forms: it is the essence and truth of all existences which it loves and nourishes and rules.

Such is the principle which Lao-tsze calls Tao. He attaches no importance to the name, which is, he admits, a mere *pis aller*. The admission seems unnecessary, for there is some justification for this application of the term Tao, which, as we have seen, may mean either Path, a customary way of action, or Doctrine, a way which men should follow. It is, therefore, not an inapt designation for the Principle which, as operating spontaneously and constantly in all natural processes, is the Path all things follow and which, in this constant spontaneity of action, is also the exemplar to which man should conform. If this account of Tao is at all accurate we may proceed to appraise the religious value of the conception.

We may at once dismiss the suggestion that when Tao is characterised as Invisible, Inaudible, Intangible, the three Chinese characters so translated are really a sort of transliteration of the word Jehovah, which their sounds somewhat remotely resemble. This is on a par with the suggestion that in the character for boat, which can be analysed into three characters meaning ship, eight and persons, we have a reference to Noah's family and the Ark. One does not need to take seriously such fantastic notions. More reasonable are those who, on the ground of some things said of Tao, would equate it with God. It is said, for instance, of Tao that "it loves, nourishes and rules all things." Such language has a theistic sound, but it does not really mean more than that Tao is, in the words already quoted from Spencer, the source of all phenomenal existences and of the law of their order. It is

perhaps decisive against a theistic interpretation of Tao that the world of things emanates from the substance of Tao—Tao is 'Mother'—and does not depend on its will. Tao is not Creator. Of course, if by the term God we mean just the ultimate principle of things which men have reached along any line of thought, whether it be a quasi-physical substance or a philosophical abstraction or a personal spirit, then we may call Tao God, but only at the cost of dropping all definite content out of the term "God." Since Tao is that of which nothing can be predicated, not even existence, therefore from any theistic, not to say Christian, point of view, it is simply misleading to speak of Tao as God; nor are certain sayings which might be quoted from Christian mystics enough to compel any qualification of this statement. Not only is Tao not God, but there is no room for God in a theistic sense in the system of which Tao is the centre. There is only one reference to the God (Ti) of the ancient Chinese in the Tao Teh King. Speaking of Tao, Lao-tsze says, "I do not know whose son it is. It might seem to be before God." Both clauses are suggestive the former of bewilderment, the latter rather of surprise. On this passage Dr Legge once suggested that it did not shock Lao-tsze to imagine that Tao had an origin and that the existence of God is implied. But this goes a little further than is warranted. When, in his search for an ultimate principle, Lao-tsze had arrived at the thought of Existence which is also Non-existence, it was hardly possible for him even to imagine anything further back. One step further might, indeed, be taken,

and was, as we shall see, actually taken by the Taoist Chwang-tsze, two or three centuries later than Lao-tsze; but it is not a step that brings us face to face with God. For Lao-tsze Tao was the ultimate, and the most that we can infer from this phrase before us " I do not know whose son it is," is that Lao-tsze may have felt a certain dissatisfaction with the idea of Tao as one of which he could give no explanation, but which hardly explained itself, and in which, therefore, it was difficult to rest, a certain bewildered hesitation as from this utmost confine of his thought he gazed into nothingness. The following clause, " It might seem to be before God," adds to this bewilderment a certain surprise, as at an unexpected consequence of his thinking. In the traditional belief of the Chinese, God, Ti or Shang-ti, though never conceived of as Creator, was at least a given Primal Existence. Hence Lao-tsze's wonder that the Tao which he had come to in his thinking should seem to be prior to Ti. This amazing appearance of priority is for us easily explicable. Clearly, Tao, as abstract existence, mere Being devoid of all qualities, is logically prior to God, a definite existence, having this or that attribute. It is this logical priority which is taken by Lao-tsze to imply metaphysical priority too. In passing, it may be noted, as confirming the primacy of the ancient conception of Shang-ti, that Lao-tsze's surprise is inexplicable unless Shang-ti was traditionally regarded as prior to all else, so that priority to Shang-ti was a puzzling thought. In Lao-tsze's metaphysics there is, of course, no reason why a God or gods should not emerge from

the fecundity of Tao just as men and things have emerged. But what has to be noted is that such a God, even if Lao-tsze believed him to exist, has certainly no adequate rôle to play in his system, but would be quite otiose there, with neither metaphysical nor ethical importance, merely one amidst the universe of things. With Tao it is very different. Lao-tsze's whole system is dominated by it. He is not theist but Taoist.

We have been dealing with the metaphysics of the Tao Teh King; but it is safe to assume that Lao-tsze's thinking was not set agoing by any purely metaphysical curiosity. For all its metaphysical background his book is predominantly ethical. His system, says Professor Douglas, is "primarily a politico-ethical system." What evidence there is goes to show that it was a practical concern that started Lao-tsze on his "dim and perilous way."

There were recluses in Lao-tsze's time, who withdrew in disgust or despair from the world of men. According to tradition Lao-tsze himself finally withdrew, and composed his book at the request of the Warden of the Western Gate before he passed beyond the ken of his age. The story of his being visited by Confucius while he was yet a Court official and of how he snubbed his visitor may be fictitious, or at least embellished, but it doubtless rightly indicates his point of view. The preceptive morality of Confucius seemed to him foolishness. If men would only cease from this fussy attempt to regulate themselves and other men, and would be content to live and let live, the

turbulent sea of human life might settle down. Legislation is futile. He who uses force inevitably fails. "The strong and stiff do not die their natural death. I take this," said Lao-tsze, "as the principle of my teaching." His system is his reaction to the disorders of his age.

We pass, then, to Lao-tsze's ethical teaching, and must try to understand it and to see how it finds its basis in his metaphysics. It is to Lao-tsze's credit that he does seek to give a metaphysical bottoming to his ethic. His fundamental ethical maxim is, "Wei wu wei," "Act non-action," to which he attaches the paradoxical corollary "wu pu wei," "there is nothing that is not done." "Act non-action," is the outward aspect of the Taoist life. Corresponding to it is the inward state for which Lao-tsze's characteristic word is "emptiness," by which we are to understand absence of desire. This state of emptiness is to be reached by what may be called a process of kenosis. He who devotes himself to Tao daily decreases: he decreases and again decreases, until he arrives at non-action. There must be withdrawal from, or indifference to, the world. For in desiring we desire something, something that is presented to us in the glittering, musical, fragrant world of the senses. By this world we are drawn out into desire and action, away from the stillness of our inner being. Entanglement in the objective world ruins the inner nature. Over against the attractive world the true life appears utterly unattractive, and he who devotes himself to it seems dull and stupid. But the sage "acts for the belly and not for the eye," that is,

he prefers the inner to the outer, a preference which is less enigmatically enjoined on us in the precept, "Keep the inner being." The life of the Taoist adept, therefore, is one inwardly of equable indifference, outwardly of 'non-action,' devoid, that is, of action for chosen ends: it is moved by the inward nature, rather than motived by an outward object; conscious, we may say, rather than self-conscious, spontaneous rather than self-determined.

That such a life is in agreement with the concept of Tao is clear enough. Tao, which is the ground of all existence and the essence of every existent thing, is a perfectly indefinite spontaneity, a dark abysmal somethingness or nothingness from which, for no reason assigned, the multiplicity of the world emanates: and such being the ultimate truth of existence, the true life is to be found in negating choice and sinking back on this inner ground of our being, so that, without striving on our part, we may be what under the urge of this spontaneity we become. According to Lao-tsze, if such a state were attained by anyone, or certainly if it were attained by a prince—if, in short, a philosopher became a king or a king became a philosopher, marvellous results would follow. The whole world of nature and of men would revert to its primal harmony. The Golden Age would return. For Lao-tsze believed in a Golden Age in which Tao had held full sway. The present state of things is a sad declension from that happier time, and Lao-tsze can indicate the stages of the decline. There is first the perfect state of things when the spontaneity of Tao reigned without any effort on man's part.

Then, at the first downward step, there came the time when the characteristic manifestation of Tao—its Teh—was consciously aimed at. Next came the age of self-conscious morality, when men endeavoured to be righteous and benevolent. Lastly, there followed the pursuit of 'propriety,' the ordering of life by rules and ceremonies. Now propriety, says Lao-tsze, is not far from hypocrisy. Such are the successive stages of degeneration. The efficacy of such devotion to Tao as finds expression in obedience to the precept "Act non-action" in arresting this decline and restoring the primeval harmony is the ultimate instance of the paradoxical promise, "Then there is nothing that will not be accomplished."

The congruity with each other of Lao-tsze's metaphysical and ethical ideas is perhaps already sufficiently clear. But Lao-tsze, looking out on the world, finds various corroborations, argumentative or illustrative, of his standpoint. There is, for instance, the relativity of ideas. Long and short, upper and lower, beauty and ugliness, any one of these implies the other, the suggested inference being that the only wise way to take is the way of indifference to both. The same lesson is suggested by the uncertainty of the issues of action. Happiness and misery, who can tell whence they may spring? Or, again, to be the subject of one of two contraries is to be the possible subject of the other: to win glory is to be exposed to shame. Safety is only to be found in ceasing to be the possible subject of either, that is by an indifference to which they are equivalents. Nature, too, supplies Lao-tsze

with illustrations; the quiet impassivity of the eternal heaven and earth, sublimely indifferent to men and things, and as against this the violence of a storm which can only be short-lived: more quaintly, the fact—if it be a fact—that an infant, because of the harmonious spontaneity of its nature, can cry all day without becoming hoarse: the quiet growth of vegetative life from the root, and its return thither: the humble plasticity of water, ever taking the lowest place and being useful to all things. Even social conventions are taken by Lao-tsze to confirm his teaching. Do not kings and rulers use self-depreciatory terms of themselves? Artificial things, too, are made to help. The value of 'emptiness' in the Taoist sense is illustrated by doors and windows, and earthen vessels, and the holes in the hub of a wheel into which the spokes fit: in all these cases it is the empty space that is useful. One illustration of a different and more subtle kind deserves mention, not only for its own sake, but because of a question of literary criticism which it raises. The illustration is this: "In enumerating the parts of a chariot there is no chariot"; and its relevancy to Lao-tsze's position may be brought out in this way: "The chariot, there it is, that for which all the parts conspire. Yet it arises out of non-being. You cannot find it among its parts. It is, because it is content not to be while wheels and spokes and bars already are; or, as we may put it, the ideas of the separate wheels, spokes and bars rush into realisation; but the idea of the chariot which has modestly lain perdu and potential now comes forth and subsumes all the

parts under it; being last and in no haste to objectify itself, it attains supreme realisation." So much for the illustration itself; now for the critical problem. This same illustration of a chariot and its parts is to be found in the record of a conversation with Nagasena, the founder of the Madhyamika school of Northern Buddhism, who taught about the beginning of the Christian era. Hence arises the question: Has there been borrowing or not? And, if there has been borrowing, from which side has the illustration been borrowed? I leave the answer to the critical editor whom we have not yet got. It is not altogether unimportant to add that the same type of illustration, only with a horse instead of a chariot for its matter, is to be found in Chwang-tsze (330 B.C.). (Bk. xxv: *Sac. Bks. of the East*, xl, p. 126) and that Professor Parker says emphatically that while "no man can say what *may* have happened, there is not a tittle of *evidence to show* that any Western thought was brought to bear upon China previously to 150 B.C." (*Studies in Chinese Religion*, p. 63.)

It will have been noticed that Lao-tsze's illustrations are adduced rather to enforce his ethical ideal than to prove its metaphysical basis, and they may be allowed their appropriateness in various degrees for that purpose. But what is the worth of the ethical ideal itself? Some of the maxims already quoted, including the famous "Repay injury with kindness," are certainly capable of a very Christian interpretation. But we have already forewarned ourselves that, as Taoist precepts, they must be interpreted in the light of the Taoist principle; and as

we read the Tao Teh King we increasingly suspect that so interpreted they bear a meaning very different from that which the Christian mind reads into them. The climate of the Tao Teh King is not the Christian climate, and betrays itself by favouring growths that are not found on Christian soil. What, for instance, do we make of such a saying as this: "Heaven and earth are non-benevolent, regarding all things as straw-dogs. The sage is non-benevolent, regarding the people as straw-dogs"; the straw-dogs here spoken of being bundles of straw used for ritual purposes and then flung away? To do justice to a saying of this kind we must remember that the whole system is in the key of Tao. So if we are startled by being told that we should imitate the nature of things in its non-benevolence, we must remind ourselves that the negation of benevolence does not mean the presence of malevolence, but just that things are as they are, without any such attitude to human beings, for instance, as seeks either their weal or their woe. So, again, if we turn to the teaching that most appeals to us as seeming to favour humility and gentleness and moderation, we notice that these qualities are all of the quietist type. The path on which they are found is the *via negativa*, and the Taoist "emptiness," absence of self-determined motive, is just the limiting case to which they are approximations. Their value lies in that approximation and not in any positive content they may still retain. It is in this same light of Tao that we must evaluate the saying, "Repay injury with kindness." Confucius had his own difficulty with it. "If you repay injury with

kindness," he asked, "with what then will you repay kindness?" The criticism criticises the critic himself. Our criticism is from a different angle. The meaning which is suggested by the English translation does not fit into the Taoist context. What the Chinese original says is, "Repay injury with Teh." But Teh, whatever it may mean elsewhere, is a *vox signata* in the Tao Teh King and means the manifestation of Tao; and Tao being "unqualified spontaneity," Teh is nothing more than "unmotived indifference." The precept, therefore, means no more than "Be a Taoist even when injured." It may rule out revenge, but, in the light of Tao, kindness is equally excluded. In the Taoist context there is no room for love or for any 'motive,' if by motive we mean a consciously adopted desire. Hence it is said that the Taoist adept has no private ends; and if it is added, "therefore his ends are never defeated," that is no more than to say that one cannot lose what one has never had. Freedom from defeat and disappointment is secured by the absence of effort and desire. The blessedness of the Taoist is the blessedness of the man who expects nothing.

In spite of all this negative air, however, Lao-tsze's thinking was, like every human activity, determined by certain values which are put forward, inducements to conform to Tao. Calm indifference (*ἀταραξία*)—and lastingness are, at least, the most explicit of these values. With the thought of lastingness is connected a kind of physiological teaching, dealing with the regulation of breathing with a view to longevity. A like feature appears in Indian Yoga

and other schools, and, of course, the soothing effect of long deep inspiration is a well-known fact. Accordance with Tao is further represented as affording immunity from harm. An illustration of this is found in the fact that a bee will crawl upon the unconscious and passive infant without stinging. The same thought is expressed also in a more startling way. "He who is good at nourishing his life walks the dry land without meeting rhinoceros or tiger, enters an army without needing to avoid soldiery. The rhinoceros has no place to infix his horn: the tiger has no place to plant his claws: the soldier has no place to flesh his weapon. What is the reason? Because there is no occasion of death." This may be meant literally, or it may be no more than a fantastic way of saying that to the Taoist death is as indifferent as life, for though death is once spoken of as "The Great Terror," the context makes it not unlikely that this is said from the popular non-Taoist point of view. Still, there are vague hints of longevity or even of a 'lastingness' after death as things desirable and to be secured by devotion to Tao. This line of thinking is perhaps one of the points through which the later degenerate Taoism, with its search for the Elixir of Immortality, can claim kinship with the ancient and more philosophical doctrine.

We do not need to discuss Lao-tsze's political teaching. Like his ethics, it has fine features—its protest against luxury, its criticism of war and of capital punishment—and it throws up maxims which could be grafted on to a better stock than Tao. But for Lao-tsze himself his conception of Tao is

the true source of his political and his ethical teaching, and determines their meaning and value. In words which we may take as a correct summary, a later author said of him: "He built his system on the assumption of an eternal Non-existence, and made the ruling idea in it that of the Grand Unity. He made weakness and humility his mark of distinction, and considered that by empty vacuity no injury could be sustained, but all things preserved in their substantiality."

In this exposition of Taoism we have drawn our evidence from the Tao Teh King alone; but the general accuracy of the outline here given will be confirmed if we can trace the continuance of its main features in the later history of the Taoist school. In this later history we must admit that there are developments which can hardly be regarded as legitimate. In one direction the original Taoist ethics degenerated into something like Machiavellianism, in which that "taking the lowest place" which Lao-tsze inculcated becomes a Brer Rabbit-like lying low, the better to accomplish selfish ends. The seeds of such a development can be detected in the Tao Teh King in some sayings, which in their original context, however, it would be unfair to interpret in such a sinister way. In another and still later phase of the School we meet with that magical Taoism whose possible point of attachment to the original Taoist stock we have already noted in the emphasis laid by the Tao Teh King on 'lastingness' and its allusions to breath management.

In contrast to such illegitimate forms of Taoism,

its legitimate development is best exemplified in Chwang-tsze, the most brilliant of Taoist writers, who lived in the latter part of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. We shall briefly cite him as evidence that we have correctly apprehended the leading ideas of the earlier Taoism. It may be noted in passing that the greater elaboration that we find in Chwang-tsze is, so far, good evidence that the Tao Teh King does express an earlier phase of Taoism and is not a later forgery. Though it is not strictly relevant to our purpose it is not without interest to find in Chwang-tsze indications of philosophical discussion as to hardness, whiteness and so on, which may have involved the problems connected with quality and substance. The puzzles of infinite divisibility are also referred to. All this, too, is evidence of a more developed thinking than the Tao Teh King reflects.

As in the Tao Teh King so in Chwang-tsze, Tao is the central and dominating idea. In the Tao Teh King Lao-tsze spoke of it as in the last resort Non-existence rather than Existence. The further step in its definition, at which we have already hinted, was taken by Chwang-tsze, who speaks of Tao as Non-existing Non-existence, that is to say, something that is beyond the Non-existence to which through its opposition to Existence there still clings something positive. In the Tao Teh King, Tao, ever one and the same, is the essence of all things. Chwang-tsze advances to the explicit thought of the illusoriness of all difference. "All things and I are one," he says. "Since they are one, how can there be speech about them?" Hence it would

seem to follow that experience is evacuated of all value. This sense of the illusoriness of all experience underlies the denial of any criterion by which 'real' experience can be distinguished from dreaming. In a well-known passage Chwang-tsze asks, "Am I Chwang-tsze dreaming that I am a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming that I am Chwang-tsze?" To a psycho-analyst the very nature of the dream may be significant.

A like blight, infecting all experience, issues from the thought of the infinite extent of existence and the relativity of all knowledge. One quotation will suffice to make this point clear. "How do we come," asks Chwang-tsze, "to make a distinction between things as noble and mean, and as great and small? If we call those great which are greater than others there is nothing that is not great, and in the same way there is nothing that is not small."

In view of all this the proper attitude is indifference and, as in the Tao Teh King, the Taoist sage will seem to other men to be stupid. Experiences which in the judgment of the common man are most violently contrasted are regarded by the Taoist with an equal mind. Life and death are alike natural. It is open to question whether the longevity spoken of by Chwang-tsze is or is not a perpetuation of individual existence after death. A corporeal longevity is certainly spoken of: "You must be still: you must be pure; not subjecting your body to toil, not agitating your vital force: then you may live for long," says one of Chwang-tsze's characters, who adds: "In this way I have cultivated myself

for one thousand and two hundred years, and my bodily form has undergone no decay." But individual existence after death is more than doubtful. Some passages may suggest it, as when it is said I will "enter the gate of the unending to enjoy myself in the fields of the illimitable. I will blend my light with that of the sun and moon, and will endure while heaven and earth endure." But what is in mind may perhaps be such indestructibility as is found in relapse into Tao :

> "Rejoice in thine imperishable being
> One with the essence of the boundless world."

In any case the Taoist is perfectly indifferent to all the transformations which successively issue from the spontaneity of Tao, "the great machinery of evolution from which all things come forth at birth and which they enter at death." "When we once understand that heaven and earth are a great melting-pot, and the Creator (Tao) a great founder, where can we have to go that shall not be right for us? We are born as from a quiet sleep and we die to a calm awaking."

The ethical outlook of the Tao Teh King is reproduced in Chwang-tsze. In both there is the same theory of deterioration from a primitive Taoist state, a theory which in Chwang-tsze finds expression in uncompromising criticism of such preceptive morality as is characteristic of Confucianism. Such self-conscious endeavour after morality cannot escape self-contradiction. "To be seeking to allow no selfish thought—that is selfish-

ness." This result is inevitable. There was a man, says Chwang-tsze, who was frightened by his shadow and disliked to see his footsteps, so he ran and ran till he died of exhaustion. If only he had stood still in the shade, there would have been neither footsteps nor shadow. Moreover, the effect of righteous rule on others is only the hypocrisy of virtue. Men in their efforts after moral and social reform are compared to fish in a drought, crowding together, gasping and trying to keep themselves alive by their combined moisture. It were far better for them to forget each other in the rivers and lakes. Such is the superiority of abandonment to Tao over external regulation. Morality of this latter kind is a falling away from the truth of things. A falling away is possible, indeed, in two directions, in this direction of positive morality and in the direction of equally positive wrong-doing. A superior man like Po-i and a robber like Kih are poles apart in the popular judgment, but in the view of the Taoist they are both disastrous departures from the truth of things. "Po-i died to maintain his fame and Kih died in his eagerness for gain." Their deaths were occasioned by different causes, but they equally shortened their lives and did violence to their nature. Why must we approve of Po-i and condemn the robber Kih? From the same tree one piece of wood may be made into a sacrificial vessel and another piece may be thrown aside. They differ in their beauty, but both have lost what was their nature. So is it with the virtuous man and the robber. Here, in this obliteration of moral distinctions we have, it

may be, the source in part of the later corruption of Taoism.

All this Taoist view of things is, in the writings of Chwang-tsze, set before us in brilliant literary style and with extraordinary fertility of illustration. The passage in which Chwang-tsze raises the question whether the truth of the case is Chwang-tsze dreaming he is a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming it is Chwang-tsze is often quoted. We are taken nearer to the heart of his teaching by the episode of the death of Chaos, one of the myths which Chwang-tsze, like Plato, employed to set forth his ideas. "The Ruler of the Southern Ocean was Heedless, the Ruler of the Northern Ocean was Hasty, and the Ruler of the centre was Chaos. Heedless and Hasty were continually meeting in the land of Chaos, who treated them very well. They consulted together how they might repay his kindness and said, 'Men all have seven orifices for the purpose of seeing, hearing, eating and breathing, while this poor Ruler alone has not one. Let us try and make them for him.' Accordingly they dug one orifice in him every day, and at the end of seven days Chaos died." The allegory indicates, says a Chinese commentator, "how action (the opposite of non-action) injures the first constitution of things." It is an instructive contrast to the Hebrew story of the successive acts by which that which was without form and void was transformed into the varied and ordered universe. But let Chaos be assumed, as it is by the Taoist, to be the ultimate truth of things and its impassive indifference to be the ultimate value, and then he is only logical in decrying all

human endeavour as on a par with the misguided benevolence of Heedless and Hasty.

The intellectual framework and ethical temper of ancient Taoism are now, in some measure, before us. How shall we appraise it? Its criticism of Confucianism as wholly external is not quite fair, for the Confucian ethic also claimed to be the expression of an inner nature. But in so far as Confucianism tended to become a mere legalism, Taoism was in the right when it insisted that our true life must be the spontaneous expression of the deepest within us, a thing of the spirit rather than of the letter. As a later Taoist put it, "The 300 rules of ceremony could not control men's natures: the 3000 rules of punishment were not sufficient to stop their treacherous villainies. But he who knows how to clean the current of a stream begins by cleaning out its source, and he who would strengthen the end of a process must commence with making its beginning correct." On the other hand, the value in Taoism of this inward reference is but small because of the poverty of Tao. It is no more than the most general, and so the emptiest, of abstractions (Being = Nothing), and the vast process of the universe is to the Taoist no more than purposeless spontaneity. What a gap separates him from the Christian thinker who dimly traces "in the very woof and warp of the universe" that which he finds clearly expressed in the drama of the passion and resurrection of Him who said, "I am the Way" (Tao). From a less mystical standpoint the great Confucian scholar Chu Hsi is right in his contention that the nature

of the principle of things should be characterised by all the rich variety of its outcome, rather than that the variety of the outcome be denied reality in favour of the blank indifference of the alleged principle. By his distinction between li and ch'i with which we shall deal in a later lecture, but which we may provisionally call a rational and a material element, Chu Hsi preserves an ideal factor in his Ultimate. With Lao-tsze, on the contrary, "the operative principle is simply the characterless Unity of Being," and so his system is at least akin to that lower Pantheism spoken of by Professor Pringle-Pattison, which is common in the cults of the East and which, being without the acknowledgment of the Ideal, must degenerate into an acceptance and justification of the actual fact just as we find it. Lao-tsze may be allowed to differ from this lower Pantheism in that he made the very characterlessness of Being his ideal and criticised the actual in its light. He even sketches for us an ideal Taoist society. But the poverty of the Taoist ideal is painfully evident in the description of this Golden Age, an age of small, isolated, incurious, village communities. Even so the choice of this ideal is an inconsistency, for it is not possible to justify the selection of just this stage of social development and the refusal of a social development still richer. The chosen ideal, too, is in itself an inconsistency because it can only be realised by some of its members falling short of the life of the advanced Taoist. If all were to become adepts, society would dissolve. The adept is depicted by Chwang-tsze in one of his allegories as approximating much more nearly to what is commonly

called the state of nature than Lao-tsze's simple villagers do. Chwang-tsze tells us of a would-be scholar finding the adept from whom he desired instruction hopping about like a bird and slapping his buttocks. That at such a sight the scholar was amazed is not wonderful, though we may wonder that he "stood reverentially" before it, while he asked, "Venerable sir, why are you doing this?" To this question the reply was, "I am enjoying myself," and to further questions the adept, whose appropriate name was "Mists of Chaos," only shook his head saying, "I do not know: I do not know," as he continued to hop about. This is perhaps as near as Chwang-tsze, though not as near as logic, takes us, to the ideal that fits in with a system in which the ultimate truth of things is Non-existing Non-existence. Compare it with even our poor apprehension of the Christian ideal in the Kingdom of God, and let principles be evaluated by their outcome.

However poor in content the life of the Taoist devotee may be, his attitude towards Tao is worthy of note. He is called on to renounce the attractions of the outer world, and, in spite of contumely, to "cast his deadly doing down" and commit himself in faith to Tao. "There is no weapon more deadly than the will," we are told. "The way is long and I have no carriage," said one aspirant after Tao. "If you give up your wish to remain here," was the reply, "that will serve you for a carriage." This attitude is, as Legge points out, analogous to the faith of a Christian in that aspect of it in which

it is a self-committal to a power not ourselves, and, based on that, an "unquestioning submission to the experiences in one's lot which are beyond one's comprehension." But, in spite of this formal resemblance, since faith takes its quality from its object, the faith that responds to Tao is very different from the faith that responds to God in Christ. What we have said of Taoist faith may be said also of Taoist morals. There is the same formal resemblance and real difference. Taoist precepts are easily, even seductively, patient of a Christian interpretation, but their original content is infra-Christian. We have seen what, I am afraid, is all we can admit as the genuine Taoist reaction to injury. Taoist humility also, even though, like its natural analogue, water, it is serviceable, does not spring, as its Christian namesake does, from the ground of love. No doubt human nature in its use of them has provided a richer content for the moral forms of Taoism than Taoism itself can consistently supply. They have thus come to mean more in common usage in China then they do in their original setting; and what humanity has already done, Christian humanity can do still more abundantly. Both Taoist faith and Taoist morals can thus be baptized into Christianity, but for all that the radical difference between Taoism and Christianity remains. The truth of the matter is that both of them are determined by their respective principles, and though the Taoist may say of Tao, "Of It and through It and to It are all things," just as the Christian may say of God, "Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things," there

is a world of difference between the characterless spontaneity to which the Taoist would reduce his personal life, and the inexhaustible riches of the Spirit by whom to be indwelt is the Christian's ideal.

CHAPTER IV

Chu Hsi: a Confucian Schoolman

The most fragmentary account of Chinese thinking on the ultimate problems of existence must not omit some account of Chu Hsi. Undoubtedly his is one of the greatest influences in Chinese philosophy. His latest English student, Professor Percy Bruce, says of him that he is "the philosopher whose teachings have done more than almost any other to mould the thought of the Chinese race. To him may be traced modes of thought and expression which may be observed among all classes from peasants to literate: their mental outlook has been formed in the matrix of the philosophy of which he is the chief exponent." If this is true, as I think it is, then we may agree with Dr Bruce that he is one of the world's great thinkers, if we ground that title on the extent of his influence. If we have regard to the intrinsic worth of his thought there are voices which call for a suspense of judgment. Not all students of Chu Hsi and of the school of which he was the chief ornament would, in this regard, agree with Dr Bruce's encomium. Père Stanislas Le Gall, a Jesuit missionary who has published a monograph on Chu Hsi, speaks of him and his school as "*ces penseurs creux qu'on est convenu d'appeler philosophes.*" "One of the

world's great thinkers," one of "*ces penseurs creux*"—here is a clash of opinion which already excites interest. Our curiosity is further quickened when we find that Dr Bruce sees in Chu Hsi the exponent of a noble ethical theism, while Père Le Gall, in common with many others, deplores the materialism into which he has seduced the Chinese race. Obviously the Christian missionary cannot be indifferent to one who is either a great teacher of truth which should find its confirmation and crown in Christianity, or the architect of one of those strongholds of error which it is the business of the Christian missionary to overthrow.

Chu Hsi was born A.D. 1130 and died A.D. 1200. His life thus falls within the period of the Sung dynasty, which lasted from A.D. 960 to A.D. 1279. In the long history of China this period is one of the most splendid in intellectual achievement. To it belonged some of China's most famous poets and a group of philosophers who are called the Sung School. Of this school Chu Hsi, though not the founder, was the most distinguished representative. Attention has often been called to the appearance at the same time of similar intellectual movements in countries far distant from each other. Of this accidental synchronism we have an example in the coincidence in time of the Sung philosophers in China and the schoolmen in Europe. For the Sung philosophers are schoolmen, working on quite different presuppositions from those of their Western contemporaries, but, like them, combining acceptance of authority with great intellectual activity and subtlety within the prescribed limits. One

might roughly indicate the position of Chu Hsi in Chinese thought by comparing it to the position accorded to St Thomas Aquinas in Roman Catholic Schools. He is the standard of Confucian orthodoxy.

Chu Hsi as a schoolman found his starting-point and his limits in the Confucian teaching. The Classics were for him what the Scriptures were to the Christian scholastics. Although he may have found meanings in his texts, as other schoolmen did in theirs, undreamed of by their authors, he had no intention of being other than their *bona fide* interpreter and defender. Among the authorities on which Chu Hsi based himself the Yi King or Classic of the Changes had a leading place. The fascination of this Classic for Chinese thinkers is out of all proportion to its interest for the Western mind. Confucius, we are told, thrice wore out the leather thongs by which the tablets of his copy of it were bound together, and affirmed that if fifty years were added to his life he would spend them in studying it. It requires perhaps more study than it repays, but the influence of the Sung school, we are told, was largely due to the fresh light it professed to throw on its puzzles. The origin of the book is attributed to King Wen, titular founder of the Chow dynasty, under which Confucius lived, and father of King Wu, who actually established it. As we have it, the book consists of sixty-four diagrams, built up of whole and bisected lines, with explanations and comments by King Wen and Chow Kung, and, along with these, other sections ascribed, but wrongly in at least some cases, to Confucius. It

sets forth a dualistic explanation of things, making much play with a pair of contrasted powers, Yang and Yin, by whose interaction everything is to be explained, and of which all contrasted pairs, male and female, light and dark, positive and negative are exhibitions or symbols. How far back lie the sources of this dualistic thinking it may be impossible to say. There is only one reference to Yang and Yin in the Shu King, and Legge is surely right in treating the Shu and the Shi as independent authorities to be interpreted in their own light. So interpreted they yield that approximation to an ethical monotheism which I have set forth in a previous lecture. Those who take the Yi King as the key to ancient Chinese thought reach a very different view of it. Hence it is that De Groot, for instance, differs so markedly from Legge in his evaluations of the religious ideas of the ancient Chinese. For Chu Hsi all the Classics, the Yi King included, stood on one level, and he no doubt treated them as exhibiting one way of thinking: but the system which he built upon them seems to have been more largely determined by the dualism of the Yi King than by any other influence.

It must be confessed that it is not easy to describe Chu Hsi's system briefly and clearly. It appears at the first glance to be more simple than it really is. Leading terms have more than one meaning. Heaven, for instance, may mean any one of three or four things; and ch'i, which is the name of one element of the fundamental duality, occurs in three senses, and in each sense has two modes, and so on to what seems an interminable dualism. One may

adduce as a physical illustration a magnetic bar with its two poles, each part of which, if it is broken into two, has again its two poles, and so on, however far the process of division is carried.

For our present purpose a diagrammatic sketch of the system is all that is needed. The first thing, then, to be noted is that we start with a dualism, li and ch'i, principle and vehicle. There is no li apart from ch'i, and no ch'i apart from li. At the origin of all things there is this compound entity, undifferentiated ch'i indwelt by li. This entity revolves and differentiates itself into two modes. From these modes emerge the five agents, and so, by continuous process of differentiation, we reach the multiplicity of existent things. The process of evolution, however, does not go on indefinitely in a straight line. It is circular, moving from its starting-point to a culmination and then returning to the starting-point again. The whole cycle takes 129,600 years to complete itself. As the daily cycle is divided by the Chinese into twelve hours, so this Great Year of the Universe is divided into twelve periods of 10,800 years each. When the cycle is complete all things will have returned to the original state of undifferentiated ch'i indwelt by li. It is interesting, though it may be depressing, to know that, according to Chu Hsi, we live in the retrogressive half of the present cycle. This cyclical process is the second point to be noted in Chu Hsi's system.

The third point to be noted is the relation of li and ch'i in individual things. Li, the immanent principle of the whole process, is one and unaltered

in every existent individual—man, animal, plant or stone. When the question was raised whether li was present in the process and products of decay, Chu Hsi's answer was, Yes. Everywhere and in all things, as they come into being and pass out of being in the world process, li is present. Li, indeed, is not only present, but is equally present in each existent thing, just as the whole moon is reflected in every pond or puddle. The differences between classes of existences and between individuals in each class are due to differences in their ch'i, which, though originally undifferentiated, somehow, through rotation or otherwise, becomes differentiated. This explanation of difference is specially to be noted in connection with moral differences among men. Chu Hsi, among other illustrations of the relation of li and ch'i, uses one of a mat-shed into which the sunlight penetrates more or less according to the closeness or looseness of the matting. So it is that li, which is immanent in all things, shines through them as their ch'i permits, and is most fully illustrated in man, in and through whose ch'i it reveals itself as moral principle, love and the other cardinal virtues being its manifestations.

Such is a bare outline of Chu Hsi's system. Some of its details are not easy to follow, and a fanciful play with etymologies and numerical correspondences is less satisfying to the modern mind than it seems to have been to mediæval thinkers. We hardly allow probative force to an analogy between the four Seasons, Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, and the four Virtues, love, righteousness, reverence, wisdom. The suggested

etymology of the Chinese terms for demon and spirit (kuei and shen), which connects them with verbs meaning to return and to expand (kuei and shen)—as if, for instance, we should connect "spirit," as being something lively, with "spirt"—is only of interest as indicating a tendency towards a rationalistic explanation of things, which, curiously enough, became a fruitful source of superstition. It seems as if, on the ground of this etymology, it was suggested that what the vulgar would explain as the operation of spirits and demons were philosophically to be regarded as the expanding and contracting operations of the positive and negative principles. So far the rationalising tendency is at work. But then this rationalising view has not been regarded as displacing the popular view, but rather as another way of stating it, and so it has come about that the Sung philosophy, by its universal application of the formula of contraction and expansion (kuei and shen) has rather favoured than discredited the belief in the operation everywhere of demons and spirits (kuei and shen).

It is not our business, however, to estimate the worth of Chu Hsi's system from the purely philosophical point of view. We are inquiring only as to its relation to our Christian propaganda. What so influential a system has to say to us in this regard cannot be negligible. Is its voice for us or against us? On the one hand, Chu Hsi has usually been regarded as a materialist, and most students of things Chinese hitherto would probably agree with Père Le Gall's condemnation of him. On the other hand, Dr Bruce regards Chu Hsi as a theist of a

very high type. According to him Chu Hsi enthrones as supreme over all a Personal God whose inmost nature is Love. This is a conclusion to be welcomed indeed if it can be made out.

I find it difficult to follow Dr Bruce all the way; but at least it is true that Chu Hsi is something more than a materialist, if by a materialist we mean one who finds the ultimate explanation of the universe in that which falls under the category of quantity, and is subject only to physical laws. Chu Hsi is not a materialistic monist. His theory is that of a dualism in which he recognised an element (li) which is not quantitative; and, as Mr Edwyn Bevan has said in defending Zeno the Stoic from a like charge of materialism, " what really signifies is whether the universe is or is not directed by rational purpose." At any rate that is what signifies when the question is whether a system is rightly called materialist. Now Chu Hsi, like Zeno, by emphasising a rational factor, makes it clear that he is not a materialist in the modern sense. Whether he is still further removed from such materialism by his recognition of this rational factor as a Supreme Personal Spirit is, I fear, open to grave doubt.

As we have seen, the two factors in Chu Hsi's system are li and ch'i. Exact equivalents to these terms may be difficult to find, but we shall not seriously mislead anyone by offering Logos and Hylé, Reason and Matter, as approximate renderings. It would be misleading to say Spirit and Matter, for spirit is not thought of save as finer matter ; and if we say Matter at all, we mean the ultimate stuff of which what we see and touch is only one variety.

Li and ch'i are inseparable. In no time and place does one exist without the other. According to Dr Bruce, Chu Hsi's chief contribution to the theory of the Universe is his conception of the Supreme Ultimate. It may be questioned whether by this term Chu Hsi meant the li or logos regarded in abstraction from the ch'i or hyle, or the composite entity, from which all things begin and to which they all return, li indwelling in ch'i, logos immanent in hyle. In either case the Supreme Ultimate is no equivalent for a theistic idea of God. Even if we take the former view and identify the Supreme Ultimate with Li pure and simple (Chi-li: Tao), yet its abstraction in this way from ch'i is in our thought only. In reality there never was li without ch'i. Li is always immanent, never transcendent. In dignity li takes precedence, but so far as the mutual relations of li and ch'i are concerned we cannot affirm any before and after, or any origination and dependence, but only the eternal coexistence of li and ch'i. Theism has its own difficulties in the relation of God to the world, but would hardly accept li only thus related to ch'i as equivalent to its idea of God. Again, all that is rational belongs to the side of li. Ch'i of very fine quality, indwelt by li, is spirit: ch'i of inferior quality, indwelt by one and the same li, is matter. Through the finer ch'i, li reveals itself in a fashion more adequate to its nature: through the grosser ch'i less adequately. But if we compare any two entities we find in both these two factors only, li which is always self-identical, and ch'i, which varies in quality, here finer, there more gross. If then,

God exists, He is a being of this kind, of fine or the finest ch'i, indwelt by li. Where can we place Him in the cosmos or, rather, in the cosmic process, for all is in process? That process is from a complex entity, undifferentiated ch'i indwelt by li, self-revolving if we regard the entity as a whole, revolved by li if in thought we distinguish its two elements—and so differentiating itself, throughout a process of which this is the initial stage, in a prolonged crescendo which gives place to a diminuendo of equal duration back to the original state. Nowhere is there any hint of the existence of any self-identical entity outside of the cyclical process. The totality of existence, li and ch'i together, is involved in the process. Spiritual beings, gods and men, may appear during its course, but, however high their rank, they, as well as the meanest existence, fall back ultimately into the dual but undifferentiated entity which was at the beginning of the cycle. The admission into this scheme of things of a Personal Spirit corresponding at all with what we mean by God would reduce it to confusion. We may, if we please, call the great whole 'God,' or we may apply the term God to the li immanent in the whole, or to some spiritual existence emerging in the process; in no case have we a Consciousness to which the whole process is an object of thought or indeed any consciousness other than the finite consciousnesses of different grades that emerge in the process only to be absorbed again. Pantheism you may have. Spiritism, with one or more transitory spirits, you may have. Theism is excluded.

I find confirmation of this conclusion in the judgment passed on Stoicism, which, as Professor Mackintosh says, few would call theistic. What is true of Stoicism is likely to be true of the system of Chu Hsi. For it can hardly have escaped your notice that the analogy between them is extraordinarily close. Each system has its two principles, one rational, eternally pervading the other, which, originally unqualified, is capable of all qualities. Each system conceives of the process of the universe as a cycle. The similarity runs, as we shall see, into their ethics, and extends even into accidental features, such as the use of a fanciful etymology, for which as little reason can be given as for the fact one sometimes notices that men who are alike in their " natural faces " are alike also in the style in which they brush their hair. Analogies are proverbially misleading. They can also be illuminating, as I think this analogy between Stoicism and the Sung philosophy is. Such an analogy is also, we may note in passing, a signal proof of the oneness of the human mind, which in different races, facing independently the same mysterious but rational universe, arrives at similar ideas. Analogies may indeed mislead if pressed too far: but still more misleading is the too easily accepted idea that Eastern and Western minds are of different structure. Genuine similarities enable us to get rid of " the vague and unserviceable conception of oriental " (E. Bevan), and confirm for us what is one of the postulates of Missions, that the mind of men, occidental and oriental, is fundamentally one, and can be led to find itself in the one Truth of things.

However, to deny Theism to Chu Hsi on the ground that the introduction of the theistic idea would dislocate his philosophical system is perhaps too *a priori* a conclusion, even though it is confirmed by the Stoic analogy. Great thinkers are not always self-consistent. We must look, therefore, at the arguments for Dr Bruce's more favourable view of Chu Hsi's system.

We begin with one drawn from the general drift of those Classics on which Chu Hsi depended. In proportion, so it is argued, to our conviction that the Classics embody a belief in a Personal God, so should be our expectation that Chu Hsi himself so believes. The argument has weight. We have used it to qualify the alleged agnosticism of Confucius. But it has less weight in the case of the philosopher Chu Hsi than in the case of the transmitter Confucius. Moreover, we have to remind ourselves what were the Classics on which Chu Hsi depended. The Shu King and the Shi King certainly speak of Shang-ti or Thien as a Personal Being; but among Chu Hsi's classical authorities and indeed as the most influential for him was also the Yi King, text and appendices, and the language of the Yi King is from a theistic point of view less satisfactory. If then the authorities speak with an uncertain sound, how can we tell on which side their professed exponent will range himself? In fact, so far as the Li of Chu Hsi is equated with the classical Thien (Heaven) it is, *a priori*, just as likely that the impersonal connotation of Li might flow over into his exposition of Thien, as that the original more personal connotation of Thien should flow

over into his idea of Li. Chu Hsi prefers Li to Thien, and that hardly shows a devotion to personal Theism on his part any more than one would infer a passion for Theism in Matthew Arnold from his substitution of the Power not ourselves making for righteousness for the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

But, whereas I have spoken of the impersonal connotation of Li, it is argued, to the contrary effect, that the very conception of Li implies personality. Li, it is pointed out, is ethical: love and righteousness are ascribed to Li and these are personal qualities. The argument proves too much. So far as it is sound it applies to Li as rational with just as much force as to Li as ethical. Impersonal reason is as little within our experience as impersonal love. But that is no good ground for making a theist of every philosopher who speaks of Reason with a capital R. The question in interpreting Chu Hsi is not, What are to us the implications of Li, but rather, How far does Chu Hsi explicate them? To use words which Professor Keith quotes in reference to Buddhism, "A philosophy must be judged by what it asserts, not by what it implies to modern thought."

Are there, then, any explicit affirmations by Chu Hsi which clearly evince a theistic position? It is easy to pick out a few epithets and phrases which have a theistic ring—"The Pilot of the Universe," "The mind of the Universe is love." But such phrases have to be read in their context. Taken so, how do we find them? Dr Bruce believes that Chu Hsi saw and accepted what seem to be the theistic implications of his language, but admits

that he did not make his theism so prominent as we could have wished, and this for two reasons: first, because he was re-acting from an excessive anthropomorphism and transcendentalism; and second, because he had the temperament of a philosopher. No doubt both causes were operative. Chu Hsi's theistic expressions are apt to be sicklied o'er with the pale cast of his philosophic thought. Our hopes of a clear declaration of Theism are raised more than once by some statement, only to be disappointed by finding that its more personal aspect is explained away, and what, taken by itself, might refer to a Person is interpreted as applying to a Principle. Chu Hsi, for instance, denies that there is a man above us in command, but that there is a man, as it were, above us acting in this way is taught, so he says, by the Odes and Records, as when they speak of the wrath of the Supreme Ruler (Ti). Still—and here comes in his philosophic gloss—the Supreme Ruler is none other than Li (that is Law). In the whole universe there is nothing higher than Law, and this is the justification for using the term Ruler. And so for the term Ruler, with its more personal ring, is substituted impersonal Law. Again, in reply to the suggestion that thought cannot be attributed to "Heaven and Earth," and that all that takes place is merely according to the constitution of things, Chu Hsi quotes from the Yi King. "Do we not see in Fu the mind of Heaven and Earth?" and goes on to say, "If Heaven and Earth had really no mind, cows would produce horses," etc. The mind of Heaven and Earth has, of course, a theistic sound, but is it not clear enough

that what Chu Hsi is asserting is not the existence of a transcendent Spirit, but only the immanence of reason in the processes of nature as against a blind haphazard materialism? So also we find that, while it is admitted that Mind certainly means Ruler, yet, again, the Ruler spoken of is identified with Law. It is not that apart from Mind there is another entity, Law, or apart from Law another entity, Mind. We are left with an indecisive see-saw between personal mind and impersonal law. Again Chu Hsi says, "The Empyrean is what is termed Heaven. It is that which rotates in endless revolution. It is true that it is wrong to say, as it is said in these days, that there is a man in the heavens judging sin; but it is also wrong to say that there is no Ruler at all"; and again, after quoting from the Classics, Chu Hsi goes on, "These passages indicate that there is a man, as it were, ruling in it all." The language is noteworthy. But it is surely taking a too favourable view of these passages to say that they prove that the term Empyrean or Heaven carries with it the conception of a Personal Ruler: we remember that Heaven "is that which rotates in endless revolution" and a Personal Ruler in endless revolution would be a strange conception. It is urged that we have here an instance of Chu Hsi's reaction against anthropomorphism and that while such sayings as I have just quoted rebut any anthropomorphic conception of the Supreme Ruler ("it is wrong to say that there is a man in the heavens judging sin"), at the same time, in the phrase "there is a man as it were ruling all," they affirm his personality. This is

too weighty a conclusion to hang on this adverbial phrase. It was Huxley, I believe, who in describing some vital process as he watched it through the microscope, said that one could almost believe he saw the intelligent operator at work. There is a legitimate argumentative use to be made of such almost inevitable language, but it does not prove that Huxley was a theist. And so in the case of Chu Hsi, it is clear enough that he will have nothing to do with anthropomorphism, but that in rejecting anthropomorphism he has not disowned theism, "throwing away the baby with the bath-water," is not so clear. Even Dr Bruce admits that Chu Hsi emphasised the spirituality rather than the personality of God. But is spirituality, divorced from personality, anything more than the reason whose immanence reveals itself both in the orderly processes of nature and in the moral constitution of man? In short, does it not come back to this, that while it would be fair to argue that the identification of "Heaven" with Li makes the universe more than merely material, it is not unfair to say that it makes God less than personal? Certainly this less theistic interpretation of Chu Hsi's position is borne out by the subsequent history of orthodox Confucianism. On this question of the personality of God it is, at best, agnostic, and rightly sees in this its difference from Christianity. One might quote as evidence of the persistence of a theistic strain the State prayers which, in the form in which we have them, date from the Ming period. There is hardly anything non-Biblical that can better, for instance, such a prayer as this, "Thou hast vouchsafed, O

Supreme One, to hear us, for thou regardest us as our Father. I, thy child, dull and unenlightened, am unable to show forth my feelings. Honourable is thy great name. With reverence we spread out these precious stones and silk, and, as swallows rejoicing in the spring, praise thine abundant love." This is such language as a theist can use. But again our Stoic parallel checks a theistic inference, even from such words as these. The Stoics, too, could use language of great devotional fervour and yet, as Professor Mackintosh says, we hardly call them theists. What he says of the Stoics I am afraid we must, however regretfully, say of Chu Hsi; though we may also apply to him what Professor Mackintosh adds of the Stoics, that they "were constantly hovering on the verge of a divine personality."

I hope that I am not guilty of inconsistency when I adduce as a further illustrative parallel the teaching of Euripides, as expounded by Bishop Westcott in his little book, *Religious Thought in the West*, especially this quotation from Euripides and its fourth line:

> ". . . O Thou
> That bearest earth, Thyself by earth upborne,
> Whoe'er Thou art, hard for our powers to guess.
> Or Zeus, or Nature's Law, or Mind of man,
> To Thee I pray; for all the things of earth
> In right Thou guidest on Thy noiseless way."

If the parallel is at all apt, it is at least not unfavourable to the theistic *possibilities* of Chu Hsi's view.

As we pass from the theology of Chu Hsi to his ethics we note another point in which the Sung philosophers and the Stoics resemble each other. In both cases the participation of all things in the

immanent reason leads to a conception of them as forming a community. It is recorded of one Sung philosopher that he was reluctant to have the grass cut that grew up against his window. Had it not as much right to its existence as he to his? If the Stoic spoke of the Dear City of Zeus, the Sung School had its counterpart to this in the saying, "The world is one family in which China is one person"—no bad motto for a cosmopolitanism in which nationality finds its rightful place. The Sung philosophers are like the Stoics in their strong ethical bent also. The immanent Li, when it emerges in man, shows itself as moral reason. To be moral is of the *esse* of man. But what Li shows itself to be in man, such it is in all existences. The universe is essentially moral. It is true that Li is not visible in all creatures, or, at least, not visible in its whole extent; but its presence in all can be inferred from its emergence in man; and even in the lower ranks of being some of its moral features can be traced. So too the Stoics "pointed with justice to the significant fact that among the primary animal instincts was found the altruistic one which impelled the parent to sacrifice itself for its young" (Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics*, p. 65). Of this doctrine in the Stoic system it has been said, "apart from a craze for generalisation we should hardly think of 'the stern daughter of the voice of God' in connection with an amœba corresponding successfully to stimulus, and yet the creature in its inchoate way is exhibiting a dim analogy to duty" (Stock, *Stoicism*, p. 56). Chu Hsi did not know anything of the amœba; had he done so he

would have admitted Li in its movements. He saw Li in wolves which draw out the dug to the young. One may remark in passing that Chu Hsi does not seem to have been troubled by the sinister side of nature. The tooth of a wolf is as real as its dug: its hostile relation to the lamb as natural as its beneficent relation to its own whelps. The tooth is no doubt fitted for its function as the dug is for its. There is Li in both. But is it moral Li? There is the rub. These are difficulties which Christian theism also has to face. Our wonder is that Chu Hsi does not seem to face them as even the Stoics did. He does not seem to have asked himself how Li, which is essentially love, shows itself in creatures like wolves. So long as he looks outward he betrays no consciousness of the discordance between the inner ideal—Li as it is revealed in his own inner consciousness—and the outer fact, such as the "wolf's black jaw," which sometimes seems so cruel. So far he is optimistic, in Schweitzer's sense of the word. The explanation may in part be that in his philosophising his idea of love becomes a colder thing than the term suggests or than it is in human relationships. In a cosmic reference it is hardly more than the vital impulse putting forth its creative energy. The heart of Heaven and Earth, he says, is productivity. So Marcus Aurelius tells us that, "the Universe loves to make whatever is about to be." It is to be noted, therefore, that a verbal coincidence may easily mislead us. It may be true that with Chu Hsi, as in Christianity, love is central; but if love with Chu Hsi is nothing more than the immanent urge of life, it is a very different thing

from the love that is central in Christianity, which not only creates, but, in its transcendent holiness, stands over against the world it has created and redeems it at infinite cost to itself.

But however Chu Hsi deals with the apparent immoralities of external nature, when he brings human nature under review the fact of evil has to be faced. His theory of human nature does accordingly take account of this fact. This theory, the origination of which he credits to his predecessors, is said to be one of the great contributions of the Sung School to Chinese philosophy. It merits some discussion, therefore, on its own account, and it has an additional claim on our attention, since it is here that Professor Giles finds one of the three main obstacles to the progress of Christianity in China. These obstacles are firstly, "the Confucian dogma that man is born good; secondly, the practice of ancestral worship; and thirdly, the rules and practice of filial piety."

The one which concerns us here is the opposition between two dogmas, the Confucian dogma that human nature is essentially good and the Christian dogma that human nature is entirely depraved. So we find Dr Ku Hung-ming, an eminent modern Confucianist, expressing his dissatisfaction with the Christian view of human nature. "Christianity says that we are all born in sin, that we are all wicked. But Mencius says, 'The nature of man is good.' I offer this sentence of China's ancient philosopher, with all humility, to the European powers." Wars are caused by suspicions. "Believe every man is good until you find that he is really bad. This is the philosophy that will keep peace in the world."

It is possible that the opposition between Sung philosophy and Christian thought is not so sharp as is supposed. To begin with, if in speaking of human depravity what is in mind is such a statement as that human nature is "wholly alien from all good," then it must be frankly admitted that this extreme position is now abandoned by most Christians. On the other hand, neither is the Sung assertion of the essential goodness of human nature to be taken quite at its face value. It is a philosophic dogma, equivalent, one might say, to the Christian dogma of original Righteousness, and as unverifiable. Neither the one nor the other has any relevance to human nature as it actually is. The Confucian dogma is true only of human nature in the abstract: it is not true of any concrete case. "The moment you apply the term Nature, what you are speaking of has already ceased to be the Nature." Strictly speaking, we cannot use the term "nature" except of those that have been born: but in those who have been born we no longer have "the nature" of which we may say that it is essentially good, but only this man's and that man's nature, on which quite a different verdict may have to be passed. In fact we have here another coincidence with the teaching of the Stoics. They did not mean by nature what we do. By the nature of anything we mean what a thing is or has been: they mean what it ought to be, what each thing is when its growth has been completed. So it is with the Sung philosophers. When they speak of the essential goodness of human nature what they have in mind is just the moral ideal,

li, which, because it is immanent in each man and is that which each man should realise, may be called his nature. To human nature, however, as it actually is in individual men they do not attribute unmixed moral goodness any more than we do. For nature in individuals is not li only, but li plus ch'i, li impeded by ch'i. This twofold interpretation of nature is, we are told, the chief contribution of the Sung School to the theory of human nature, and once it is grasped the sharp opposition between Confucian and Christian teaching disappears. We may note, moreover, that this theory of a self-identical li combined with ch'i of varying quality, while it may be a plausible explanation of differences of endowment, does not explain the origin of moral evil. Evil that should flow inevitably from anyone's inferior endowment would not be moral evil. The li ch'i theory, therefore, is either a determinism which obliterates moral distinctions, or it leaves the question of the origin of evil where it was. We are dangerously near determinism, also, in the doctrine that after a certain point in its cycle the world must necessarily degenerate, as if its moral oxygen were being used up. Here, indeed, imposed on all those born in the recurring semi-cycle is a *damnosa hæreditas* which shuts them up to pessimism—unless there is a breaking in of help from another sphere, "our great redemption from above to bring." For the concrete nature of man is, if not sinful, at least imperfect, with an imperfection that is difficult to overcome. "The object of self-culture," we are told, "is to transform the ethereal endowment," that is, the portion of ch'i

allotted to each of us, and this, we are again told, is "exceedingly difficult to accomplish." So Chu Hsi says of himself, "Though my nature is good, when I would act in accordance with it I fail and find that it has been made captive by human desire." An admission of this kind by such an one as Chu Hsi is sufficient perhaps to show that the Sung doctrine of human nature does not bar the way of the Christian evangelist, even if the Christian dogmatist is not quite satisfied. The evangelist, if he is wise, will eschew general propositions about human nature and address himself to the man before him. As for the dogmatist, I do not say that he should be satisfied. There are two points on which he may come up against the Sung philosopher. The first is this: the philosopher affirms moral perfection of the sages, of whom Confucius was the latest. The Christian dogmatist would deny this, while affirming the perfection of Christ. Obviously this is a question of the facts in either case, and of a moral judgment on them. The second point of collision is as to human inability. The admission that progress towards moral perfection is exceedingly difficult hardly warrants the assertion of the absolute necessity of grace. Indeed, grace might seem to be excluded by the Sung philosophy when it says: "When men have sought the conversion of the physical element in their constitution, their success in that conversion and their return to their original nature are not imparted from without." This may be an assertion of human self-sufficiency. Perhaps we may take it as no more than an assertion of "the impenetrability of personality," and when we assert the

necessity of grace we must somehow combine that with the truth that grace is more than just a force "from without." In any case, from the practical point of view it is only personal confession of moral impotence that is of any value, and such personal confession comes not as an inference from a general statement of human inability but from an experience of inner conflict and defeat in the light of the moral ideal. Here the moral teaching of the Sung School may be a useful means of so deepening the sense of difficulty that it more and more approaches a conviction of inability. It is not possible to go into that moral teaching here. Suffice it to say that it challenges all the reserves of unaided human nature when it confronts us with words like these, which I have already quoted: "To blame ourselves as we blame others is to fulfil the moral law. To love others as we love ourselves is to perfect love."

We may now try to sum up the value of Chu Hsi's system from our point of view. To begin with, we can heartily welcome its emphasis on the Reason immanent in the world and on the fact that this immanent Reason is essentially moral. This belief certainly differentiates the system from crass materialism, and is, or at least points towards, a spiritual interpretation of the universe. As Dean Inge has said, "The evidence seems to me to point to a purposiveness running through all nature, sleeping in the stone, dreaming in the flower, and partially awake and conscious in man, a single purpose which points to a God who is both immanent and transcendent" (*Science, Religion and Reality*, p. 367.) While we may hesitate to believe that Chu Hsi was

himself a theist, we may legitimately press the theistic implications of his thought and language. I am not sure that starting even from such premises as he gives us—or indeed from any premises—we can logically evince the truth of Theism. What we can say, however, is that Theism preserves all that is of value in Chu Hsi's conception of Li, and contains much more; and we can invite him, even though we cannot logically compel him, to advance to this richer theistic view, or, to put it otherwise, to return, not without gain, from his exploration of philosophical principles to an appreciation of the more personal religion that underlies the anthropomorphic language of the Classical books.

In the second place, we may heartily welcome the wonderfully lofty morality Chu Hsi and his school teach, and where its demands have evoked a confession of inability to conform to them we may bring near the Christian conception of grace, which, without violence "from without," reinforces the personality by bringing it within the redemptive fellowship of Christ's Spirit, an influence more potent than the code of a school or the example of a sage.

In the third place we challenge the idea of a world cycle. Such a cyclical process would reduce the universe to futility; and the idea of it is incompatible with the foundation of Chu Hsi's system. For in the cyclical process whatever value is produced is produced only to be annulled; and to produce only to annul is the characteristic not of Reason, but of mania or caprice. There is not even outside the cycle a personal consciousness to take pleasure in the process of emergence and evanes-

cence; and if there were such a spectator, he could hardly be identified with Reason, which expresses itself in love and righteousness. This is no "faithful Creator." In the ultimate issue, therefore, the system is pessimistic. Mr Edwyn Bevan, after expressing the natural wonder that the human mind has ever acquiesced in such a view, even when we allow for the recoil from the notion of an absolute end, adds, "but it has done so, not in Greece only, but in India and even in modern Europe." To these habitats of this world-view China must be added. Our criticism, however, must be more than destructive. As preachers of a Gospel we bring something by which the mind of man is emancipated from its subjection to this vanity. That which we bring is such an experience of a personal relation to an ever-living Person as is guaranteed through Christ; while for the futility of endlessly recurring emergence and submergence we substitute an ever-living and therefore ever-developing Kingdom of love.

It may be that the superiority of the Christian scheme in such points as these is not capable of logical demonstration. But this consideration need not close our lips even before Chu Hsi. We are to commend our Gospel to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Does not Chu Hsi himself assert the priority in dignity of li to ch'i? Who would deny it? But what logic can demonstrate it? To a similar value-judgment the Christian faith, in its challenge of the Sung philosophy, may well be content to make its appeal.

CHAPTER V

The Philosopher Wang: A Chinese Protestant

Any general term is apt to conceal particular differences. We speak of the Confucian School and are apt to think of a uniform system of philosophy, and to forget that within the School there must needs be individual philosophers each with his own point of view. If Chu Hsi is the greatest of the post-classical names and the standard of Confucian orthodoxy, still there have been thinkers, both before and after him, who hold their Confucianism with a difference. Before him, for instance, was Han Wen Kung, who had his own theory of human nature, a man notable also for his stand as a Confucianist against the increasing popularity of Buddhism, and his bold and vigorous protest against the veneration paid by his Imperial Master to a Buddhist relic. In the times later than Chu Hsi we need not go beyond the present day to find Chinese scholars whose exposition of Confucian principles is worthy of examination. Somewhat midway between Chu Hsi and the present time is the philosopher Wang Yang Ming whom here we are briefly to consider. Wang was born in A.D. 1472. He came of a line of scholars and officials—the two things went together in those days—and was himself a scholar and an official.

It is a remarkable fact that the great Chinese thinkers have all been men of affairs, playing their part in the political life of their time. Confucius and Mencius, Chu Hsi and Yang Ming, were political advisers or themselves administrators; and, if one may judge from what is recorded of them, those they ruled did not suffer by having philosophers as their rulers. Wang's official career was not one of continuous sunshine for him. He early incurred the hatred of a Court eunuch, and was banished to a distant and obscure post. He emerged, however, from this eclipse, and in spite of opposition rose by his ability and integrity to the rank of Viceroy. He died in 1529. Such is the outline of Wang's political life. If this were all, Wang would have been no more than one among the many able and honourable officers whom China has produced in the course of her long history. Wang's real importance lies in his work as a thinker and teacher. His banishment was a blessing in disguise. His exile was to him, what prison has been to others, the occasion of spiritual enlargement. His post was in a district described as "the resort of venomous snakes and poisonous worms, the habitat of babbling barbarians with whom it was impossible to converse." There, while he expected the sentence of death, keeping up the while a kindly and courageous spirit, he meditated on questions which had long perplexed him; and as he meditated there came to him that enlightenment which has given him a distinctive place among Confucian scholars. When Luther was fighting for the right of private judgment against the traditionalism of

Rome, Wang, in the face of obloquy and opposition, was standing for personal insight against Confucian orthodoxy. This is the new and characteristic note in his teaching, and our main business is to try to see exactly what it is and what is its importance for us; but we shall have something to say also of his views on other matters, for Wang's was a live and interesting mind.

Wang has his roots, of course, in the Chinese past; but we need not go into that very deeply. We need only recall the fact that there is among the Chinese Classics a book called "The Great Learning." This was regarded as a kind of manual of education, and in Wang's time the edition and rearrangement of it by Chu Hsi (A.D. 1130-1200) was already authoritative. Now, in "The Great Learning" there occurs the following passage: "The Ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the Empire, first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their own states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended their knowledge to the utmost. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things." From this long sorites it is clear that the very beginning and foundation of the whole moral achievement is "the investigation of things." Now, this phrase Chu Hsi explains as "exhausting by examination the principles of things and affairs

with the design that their uttermost point may be reached." He quotes as the author of this view the philosopher Ch'ing, who said that "'The Great Learning' at the outset of its lessons instructs the learner, in regard to all things in the world, to proceed from what knowledge he has of their principles, and pursue his investigation of them till he reaches the extreme point. After exerting himself in this way for a long time he will suddenly find himself possessed of a wide and far-reaching penetration. Then the qualities of all things, whether external or internal, subtle or coarse, will all be apprehended, and the mind in its entire substance and its relations to things will be perfectly intelligent." As we consider what all this means we agree with Legge that this programme is "far beyond and above the condition and capacity of men. How can we suppose that in order to secure sincerity of thought and our self-cultivation, there is necessary the study of all the phenomena of physics and metaphysics, and of the events of history?" The absurdity of the position may be patent to us, but such was the orthodox view in Wang's time. He himself came later in his life to question if anyone could be found who was able to carry out Chu Hsi's teaching. But in all the ardour of youth he attempted the impossible. He set a friend of his to investigate the bamboo. After three days his mental energy was exhausted and he fell sick. Wang said that it was because his strength was insufficient, and himself took up the investigation. But after seven days he also became ill. So he and his friend mutually sighed and said: "We cannot be either

sages or virtuous men, for we lack the great strength required to carry on the investigation of things."

This baffling experience came to Wang when he was in his eighteenth year. There followed years of study, during which he advanced from one academic degree to another, not, however, in an uninterrupted progress. Envy withheld one degree from him. He was not "passed." But, while others were ashamed because they had failed, he laughed, saying, "You are ashamed because you failed: I am ashamed because my mind is perturbed at my failure." However, in spite of checks he finally reached the grade of Hanlin, the highest a scholar can attain. Thereafter he was employed in various official capacities. It was not until he was thirty-five or thirty-six that he fell into disfavour and was banished. During all these years, however, the problem of the perfect life seems to have been before him. At any rate it recurred to him now. "The great object of his meditations at this time was 'What additional method would a sage adopt who lived under these circumstances?' One night it suddenly dawned upon him in the midnight watches what the sage meant by 'investigating things for the purpose of extending knowledge to the utmost.' Unconsciously he called out, got up and danced about the room. All his followers were alarmed; but the Teacher, now for the first time understanding the doctrine of the sage, said, 'My nature is, of course, sufficient. I was wrong in looking for principles in things and affairs.' He meditated upon the words of the Classics and found them entirely in

harmony with this." This is the record of what was the critical experience in Wang's life, and we must try to understand it.

From the concluding words of the record of this experience it is clear that Wang remained a Confucianist. If he reinterpreted the Classics, still it was to the Classics he turned, just as much as did Chu Hsi. His difference from Chu Hsi was a difference between two members of the same school. Indeed, while fully conscious of the difference, Wang was not anxious to emphasise it. What exactly was the difference? Professor Henke, to whom English readers owe what acquaintance they have with Wang, and from whose translation I have been quoting, puts it in this way. "Chu Hsi was a realist, believing that things exist in their own right apart from the mind; not, however, in such a way as to make knowledge of them impossible. He held that external things partake of the principles of the mind, and that for this reason knowledge may be perfected by investigating the principles of all things with which we come into contact." On the other hand, "Wang Yang-ming was an idealist of the monistic type. He thought that nothing exists independent of and apart from mind." One has perhaps to be on one's guard in applying terms like realist and idealist to these ancient thinkers, lest we think of them as consciously facing problems which were in fact not before them. The problem of knowledge to which the terms realist and idealist are relative was hardly raised then. There is one passage in Wang which might suggest a Berkleian point of view. A friend said to Wang, "You say

that there is nothing under heaven external to the mind. What relation to my mind have these flowers and trees which blossom and drop of themselves?" The Teacher said, "When you cease regarding these flowers they become quiet with your mind. When you see them, their colours at once become clear. From this you know that these flowers are not external to your mind." Again inquiry was made, "Heaven, earth, spirits, gods, and things have existed for thousands of years. 'Why should it be that when my intelligence is gone they all exist no longer?' The Teacher said: 'Consider the dead man. His energy and intelligence have been separated. Where are his heaven, earth and things?'" It may be that, as Prof. Henke says, we may infer from these passages that Wang taught that when the mind stops thinking about things they, *ipso facto*, are no more. Certainly they indicate that Wang's teaching could be understood to mean this. Misunderstood, I rather think. Perhaps we do at least full justice to Wang if we say that he taught that consciousness was organic with the external world, that external things come to their own only when they are experienced. Outside of experience they are sunk for us in quiescence: in experience they show themselves to be what they really are.* His interest was not in things considered apart from the mind, as much out of relation with it as they are to a dead man; but only

* NOTE.—I have been given a reference to Aristotle, "De Anima," III, ii:

(1) ἡ . . . τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ ἐνέργεια καὶ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἡ αὐτὴ μέν ἐστι καὶ μία, τὸ δ'εἶναι οὐ τάυτὸν αὐταῖς. (2) ἡ τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ ἐνέργεια καὶ ἡ τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ ἐν τῷ αἰσθητικῷ.

in that experience in which mind and things meet. This is where Wang laid the emphasis, and because of this new emphasis he has been blamed by some modern Chinese for China's failure to advance in the scientific understanding of nature. One might here suggest, with more than justice to Wang, a comparison between him and Socrates, in so far as Socrates turned attention away from the old physical philosophy to the study of man. But we must remember that China was not in Wang's time on any road that would ever have led to real scientific knowledge, and Wang's emphasis was not a deflection of interest from science to morals. His predecessors and rivals were not less interested in morals than he. The difference between him and them was one of method. It was not in the investigation of things, but in the investigation of experience, mind in contact with things, that Wang discovered those principles native to the mind, the development of which he believed to be each man's life-task. For, like all Chinese philosophers, his interest is practical rather than theoretical, his problem is ethical rather than epistemological. For instance, the Teacher said: "Is there anything in the universe that exists independent of the mind? Is there any law apart from the mind?" And to illustrate his meaning he says, "In the matter of serving one's father, one cannot seek for the principle of filial obedience in one's parent. When the mind is free from the obscuration of selfish aims, it is the embodiment of principles. It is not necessary to add one whit from without. If the mind is sincerely devoted to filial piety, it will naturally think of and

provide for the comfort of parents in winter and summer." The truly filial mind, up against the actual circumstances in which it sees the parent, will spontaneously express itself in appropriate ways. "Compare it to a tree. The truly filial mind constitutes the root: the many details are the branches and leaves. One does not first seek for the branches and leaves, and afterwards cultivate the root." Wang's point seems to be that a man should envisage his situation: should endeavour by his inner light to do this with sincerity, clearing the mind of selfish desires, and receive without prejudice the response that his nature makes to him. It was when he was pondering a question of duty, asking himself what method a sage would adopt in just such circumstances as he was then in, that his illumination came to him. We turn again, therefore, to this illumination to ask what exactly it meant.

In this illumination Wang gained two things. Firstly, he realised the meaning of the phrase "the investigation of things." The things to be investigated are not the manifold things of the world apart from himself, but personal relations within his own experience, a "thing" being "that on which the purpose rests." No longer is an impossible omniscience demanded of him as the beginning of the moral life. Hope, therefore, rose upon him. The path to the perfect virtue of the sages was no longer barred to him. But though the door was open, to enter and to make progress called for persevering effort. The condition of entrance and of advance was a constant

examination of his concrete self, realising itself in definite purposes. With Wang, as with Socrates, "the unexamined life" was no true living. In the second place, the flash of insight that came to him, both because of its content and because of the assurance with which it came to him, threw him back on himself for his ultimate standard of truth. There were in him luminous and self-evident principles. There was also in him the faculty of seeing the truth as true, an "intuitive faculty," on the decision of which he must take his stand. He carried his own law and his own light within himself. Professor Henke thus expresses this element in Wang's teaching. "Every individual may understand the fundamental principles of life and of things, including moral laws, by learning to understand his own mind, and by developing his own nature. This means that it is not necessary to use the criteria of the past as present-day standards. Each individual has the solution of the problems of the universe within himself. 'Man is the measure of all things.'" This is Wang's conversion; his translation from a traditional position, which was to him a dungeon of despair, to the hope and freedom of personal insight. For one may doubt whether "intuitive faculty" is the correct translation always for that idea which hereafter ruled his thinking. No doubt, sometimes Wang has in view no more than that "faculty" by which we have the knowledge of right and wrong. For instance, Wang says: "The good-evil mind does not need to deliberate in order to know, nor does it need to learn in order to be able to act. It is for this reason that

it is called the intuitive knowledge of good." This intuitive knowledge of good, which is characteristic of all men and is naturally hard to obliterate, is equivalent to what we call conscience, and, with an interesting anticipation of Martineau, Wang holds that the proper subjects for its judgment are a man's purposes. "Whenever any purposes or thoughts are manifested, they are all known and recognised by the intuitive faculty," whether they be good or evil.

But at times Wang's language has a wider scope and carries us beyond thinking of an intuitive faculty, which does not need to deliberate, to thinking of the whole man in whom the faculty functions. Thus he says, "If the mind is in tranquil repose, your intuitive faculty will naturally carefully inquire, minutely investigate, and thus be able earnestly to deliberate whether the thing under consideration is in accordance with the highest excellence." "If the seven passions follow their natural courses they are all functions of the intuitive faculty." "The little intuitive knowledge of good you have is your own standard. You must not blind it nor impose upon it, but must truly follow its lead. What confidence and joy there is in this! At first I doubted that a simple obedience to the intuitive faculty would be sufficient, but when I had very carefully examined it I found that it is deficient at no point whatsoever." "All the sages have traversed this road: all the virtuous men have followed this track." In short, if we put together all that Wang says on the matter, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that he is thinking of no

"faculty," but of personality, with its inalienable right of self-determination in the light of its own insight. His hold of this principle makes him a true Protestant. By it he is carried on to independence, not only of Chu Hsi, but of Confucius himself. "It is not without reason," he says, "that I reject the philosopher Chu's division (of 'The Great Learning') into chapters, and undertake an excision of his commentaries. It is good that learning is acquired in the mind. If it is sought in the mind, and there is something wrong, though the words are those of Confucius, the mind will not accept it as correct. If it is sought in the mind and is found there, though the words are those of a common man, must it not be accepted? How much more is this true if the words are those of Confucius." By the same principle he claims independence of mob-judgments. "What the mass considers correct a man does not venture to consider right, if in seeking it in his own mind he is not able to verify it. What the mass considers wrong, he does not venture to consider wrong, if in seeking it in his own mind he is able to verify it." This position is so central in Wang's thinking that I give another illustration of it from a conversation between Teacher Wang and an inquirer called Te-fu. "Te-fu said, 'How can the mind determine what is right and wrong?' The Teacher said, 'He who lacks the capacity of distinguishing between right and wrong is not a man. In tasting sweetness and bitterness the mouth of any other individual is quite as well able to make distinctions as I Yao's; in judging beauty and ugliness other men's eyes are

able to make distinctions as well as Li Lou's; and in making distinctions between right and wrong anyone's mind is like that of the sages. You should establish its sincerity, and that is all, lest in relation to the path of duty the mind be not equal in sincerity to the mouth in tasting flavours or to the eyes in testing colour.' Te-fu said, ' In that case would it not be true that what is recorded in the Five Classics and promulgated in the Four Books is all of no use?' The Teacher said, ' Who says that these things are of no use? They are the depository of sweetness, bitterness, beauty and ugliness. If one seeks without sincerity for what they record, nothing but discussions about flavour and colour will follow. Who is able to get at the truth in such circumstances?' " Te-fu seems to have been alarmed lest the Classics as an " objective " standard should be abolished. Wang appears to have realised the true Protestant attitude towards a canon of Scripture or any other external authority, whether the shout of the crowd or the *ipse dixit* of the sage. His is certainly a remarkable divergence from the blind and servile traditionalism too characteristic of most Chinese scholarship.

Let it not be thought, however, that Wang hands himself over to mere subjective caprice. One of his students who was pulling up weeds complained of the difficulty of cultivating the good and getting rid of the evil. The Teacher pointed out that he was here applying a purely subjective standard. " If you take delight in seeing the flowers, then you will consider the flowers good and grass bad. If you desire to use the grass, you will in turn consider the

grass good. This type of good and evil has its source in the likes and dislikes of your mind." In saying this the Teacher seemed to the student to wipe out any objective difference between good and evil, and to reduce true wisdom to an absolute indifference such as Buddhism inculcates. The Teacher, however, distinguished. Buddhism is content to rise, or sink, into this indifference to which things are in themselves neither good nor evil and to remain there. It therefore "cannot enter actively into matters of government." How indeed can it, having no given end for which to work? But the indifference of the sage means that he is not actuated by his purely subjective desires. There is, however, "natural law," according to which he acts and in the furtherance of which things are good. Well, but, replied the scholar, if the grass is not bad why pull it up? Why not, said the Teacher, if it impedes progress? But in that case, rejoined the scholar, you again have action in accordance with likes and dislikes. No, said the Teacher, it is not action in accordance with likes and dislikes; but this does not mean that there is a complete lack of likes and dislikes, for a man without these would be devoid of consciousness. It "means simply that in both likes and dislikes one follows the lead of natural law and does not act while one is harbouring a single selfish thought; thus one is as though he had neither likes nor dislikes." The scholar asks how all this applies in the case of the love of beauty, and the dislike of evil odours; how can these be other than selfish? But the Teacher will not have it so; and though we may find it

difficult to distinguish "the natural law," the universal rational element, in the case let us say of liking or disliking certain smells, it is clear what Wang's position is. He distinguishes between individual subjectivity, and the true objectivity based on the inward but universal element in human nature. Wang takes his stand purely on rational insight. Uprooting grass is in itself neither good nor evil, but "you must learn by introspection what manner of mind you harbour at the time you wish to pull it up." You do not investigate the grass, but your volitional relation to it, the resting of your purpose on it; that is the "thing" to be investigated.

It is, I think, his insistence on this general position that gives Wang his importance, at least for our purpose. So far as theological ideas are concerned there is little to be gained from him. He seems to occupy the later Confucian position in which God is identified with the Reason that is immanent in nature and in man, and is not thought of as personal. Wang makes no distinctive contribution here. But his reiterated appeal to rational insight and his insistence on the duty of self-determination in the light of one's rational nature, these have a twofold and constant value, against traditionalism, as was more necessary in Wang's own day, and also against subjective caprice, as is more necessary to-day. They are most welcome also to the Christian preacher, for they mean the open mind and the possibility, therefore, of true Christian faith. One's wonder is excited as to what is understood by the word

" faith " when one is told that the favourable soil for faith is to be found, not in the open mind, but in a quite different quarter, in the " essential conservatism " of China. " Conservatism," it is said, " is the very essence of faith. No man trusts another who is as unstable as water. Nor does the unstable man ever really trust." But surely here the immobility of blind custom or habit is confused with the stability of faith. Fidelity even is not identical with faith, though it is an indispensable adjunct, perhaps an inseparable accident of genuine faith. Faith certainly is not compatible with fickleness, but it is congenial with that open-mindedness which is the very antipodes of such conservatism as has been too characteristic of China. The motto of faith is surely " Test all things: hold fast that which is good," and not, " Test nothing: hold fast that which you have." The rock-like conservatism of China which evoked the passionate prayers of St Francis Xavier has gone, but not yet is every Chinese mind free from conservative prejudice. In asking for sincere investigation of our message we have Wang on our side. Consider how near in this matter Wang and Jesus are to each other. Take these two sayings, first this of Wang's, " If the learning is sought in the mind and the thing is right, then though it be in the words of an ordinary man, the mind will not venture to consider it wrong "; and then this saying of Jesus, " He that is of the truth heareth my words." Are not the two poles wonderfully near; near enough to let one hope that the spark of conviction may leap the interval?

Here we have, as I have said, Wang's chief contribution, but his is such an interesting mind that we may cultivate acquaintance with it a little longer.

The great aim in life, according to Wang, is the development of "the intuitive faculty," or let us say of the personality of each man. For each man the way is open to its perfect realisation. All men may be sages, even as Yao and Shun were. They will not, indeed, be equal to Yao and Shun in all respects even if they attain sagehood. There are great sages and little sages, alike sages but differing according to their natural endowments, even as ingots may be big and little, though all pure gold. The path to sagehood is simple obedience to the intuitive faculty each man has. His share of it may be small, but by obedience it may be developed. The important thing is not absence of faults, but the direction in which one is moving.

Wang insists on the close connection between knowledge and action. To begin with, he carries his thought of action inward from the deed to the thought. "At the very point at which thoughts are manifested, there is incipient action." And again, he seems to have in view the fact that knowledge is never "dry." It brings with it an emotional element which is already movement, an "inclination," as we say, towards the thing known or a declination from it. When one sees beauty, Wang says, he loves it. He does not determine to love it after seeing it. The seeing of beauty is knowledge; the loving it is action. So it is with our moral intuition. The human mind naturally finds pleasure in the principles of righteousness,

just as the eyes take pleasure in colour and the ears in sound. If there is separation between knowledge and action, "it is due to selfishness and does not represent the original character of knowledge and action." No one who really has knowledge fails to practise it. Knowledge without practice should be interpreted as lack of knowledge.

Because of the obscuration due to selfishness the investigation of things is necessary. This "investigation of things" is, as we have seen, nothing other than a sincere scrutiny of our actions, an action being not merely the outward act, but the whole determination of the person in any direction. By such scrutiny may be removed that dust of selfishness which daily settles on the clear mirror of the intuitive faculty. Wang here is true to facts that we all recognise. Much of our uncertainty as to the path of duty, or—to put it religiously—as to God's will for us, is due to an almost subconscious selfishness, a secret desire to have our own way, and as soon as there is a definite abandonment of self-will and an honest intention to accept "God's will," one's duty, whatever it may be, often becomes at once surprisingly clear. Selfishness is not to be identified with desire. "The seven passions" may have their ordered working in accordance with the complete sway of natural law. Wang is, therefore, no ascetic, out for an impoverished life withdrawn from the world. Wealth and honour, he says, do not embarrass men: men allow themselves to be embarrassed by them. If the determination is fixed on truth and virtue, wealth and rank afford an opportunity for practising virtue and becoming estab-

lished in it. Here is true freedom, which is not "giving rein to the seven passions and acting unscrupulously." Freedom means that "the mind is not embarrassed by desire, and that the individual finds himself in no situation in which he is not himself." It is perhaps not easy to find a better definition of freedom. One may quote here Wang's saying, which has quite a Kantian ring, that when a man reaches the state in which he is completely in accord with natural law, he is no longer a mere "utensil," or, as we might say, is no longer a thing but a person. With this I would take another profound saying, that joy is an original characteristic of mind. It may be overlaid by sorrow, affliction, confusion and self-abandonment; but as soon as the person is sincere, it springs up again. In all this Wang is telling us that when our nature rids itself of an alien selfishness, and lives by those innate principles which it sees to be true, and which are common to all men, then alone it realises its true life of joyful liberty.

The "investigation" which leads to this result is not the privilege of a leisured few, but a duty incumbent on all. Nor does it involve a withdrawal from social life. On the contrary, what is to be investigated is just our action in the particular relation in which we find ourselves, as magistrate on the bench or attendant sweeping a room, to take Wang's own illustrations. "If we eliminate the experiences of mutual intercourse, the development of the intuitive faculty is thereby made impossible." One illustration of his position shows that Wang was not devoid of a certain humour. "One day

there was a noise of fighting and angry speech on the street. One man said, 'You are lacking in moral principles.' The other said, 'You are lacking in moral principles.' The first said, 'You have a deceptive mind.' The second answered, 'You have a deceptive mind.' The Teacher heard them, and calling his disciples said, 'Hear them; these men that are screaming at one another, for they are discussing learning.' His disciples answered, 'They are scolding; how can it be learning that they are discussing?' The Teacher said, 'Do you not hear that they are speaking of moral principles and the mind? If this is not discussing learning, what is it?'" Thus in social action and interaction, through self-scrutiny and the reasonings wherein men accuse or else excuse one another, the intuitive faculty is developed.

The intuitive faculty is essentially social. Under its influence men do not distinguish between themselves and others, nor between things and themselves. For, as Wang says, such men may together be compared to the body of a single person, with the interdependence and mutual helpfulness of its members. Here Wang distinguishes himself from the Buddhists, who may be free from the selfishness of lust, but whose withdrawal from social life is selfish, and not in accord with the moral principles which are both native to the mind and realised only in social relations. The philosopher Moh also, who disregards the natural relations of society, parent and child, etc., in favour of an indifferently level benevolence to all men, is criticised by Wang as lacking any starting-point. Wang's doctrine is

that the moral personality realises itself in freedom and joy only as it is developed by conscientious action within human society.

Wang's insistence on self-realisation determines his views on education. Here are some of his points. He deprecates cram and pot-hunting. The accumulation of knowledge produces intellectual dyspepsia. Pedants think that learning consists in seeking what is difficult to understand. They become mere expositors of traditional lore, ambitious of fame for themselves. Trying for a degree need not hinder a student from acquiring the truth; still, one should fear lest it deprive him of his higher purpose in life. There are better things than getting a degree early in life. "A flower that has a superabundance of petals does not bear fruit." A devotion to fame and a devotion to truth are contrary the one to the other. One who is out for fame is likely to be seduced into the pursuit of what is superficial. What is essential is that a man should see a thing for himself. No amount of accumulated learning can make up for lack of personal vision. Better a small spring than a large pond. True learning is a personal possession, not a display of borrowed goods. Intuitive, i.e. personal, knowledge, is the only real knowledge, and extension of this knowledge the only real culture. Only so does a man realise himself.

In the pursuit of this self-realisation a man is kept humble, since he daily recognises his own insufficiency. He who pursues mere learning, on the other hand, comes to regard himself as having a

superabundance. As St Paul said, "Knowledge puffeth up." To Wang, humility is the foundation of all virtue; pride, the chief of all vices. On one occasion, pointing to the bowl from which he was eating, he said, "This bowl being underneath is able to contain this rice. The table from below is able to support the bowl. . . . The earth is able to carry the table." Only by descending, i.e., by being humble, is one truly great. In this same spirit he condemns all Pharisaism. Reproof is at times a duty of friendship; but it must not be administered with any selfish desire to be the big man, nor to display one's own frankness and uprightness; but in "a loyal, devoted, genial and loving way," so as to influence the other man without angering him. The door must always be kept open for the return of the erring. "Though a man was formerly a robber and highwayman, this does not now hinder him from being a superior man. If anyone should say, 'I was formerly like this, and though I reform and practise virtue, no one will have faith in me,' he would not be saved from his errors, but would cherish shame, hesitate to stop his evil actions, and voluntarily remain in the depraved, abominable condition to the end. I lose hope for such people." It follows that in dealing with an erring brother there must always be that charity which believeth all things, hopeth all things, so that he may not lose hope for himself. If Wang knew that knowledge puffeth up, he knew also that it is only love that edifieth.

In all the discussions and correspondence, some of the contents of which I have indicated, Wang

reveals himself as a man of high principle, devoted to the search for truth. "I am in the midst of mourning and weeping"; he writes to a friend, "however, the welfare of the truth does not permit me to cease thinking." He was the centre of a group of friends and disciples to whom he was "the Teacher," and by whose confidence he was cheered. A sympathetic letter draws from him the exclamation, "How like hearing a footstep in a deserted valley." It is delightful to think that away in China in those far-off days there was a group of men discussing with earnestness and insight fundamental moral questions, and encouraging one another in their endeavour to see the truth and obey what they saw. If it is so that, as Professor Henke says, Wang's thought is exercising a profound influence upon the Chinese and Japanese to-day, this we may hail as of good omen, and servants of Him who is supremely Truth and Love, who spoke with authority and not as the scribes, should not neglect the lines of approach which Wang provides.

CHAPTER VI

Idolatry and Ancestor Worship

The very title of this chapter may evoke a protest. The bringing together of these two subjects may be objected to as a *suggestio falsi*, as begging the question whether the rites observed in relation to deceased ancestors are really worship in the sense in which idols are worshipped, and so as determining in a narrow and unsympathetic way a point on which opinion in China, both Christian and non-Christian, has been and still is divided. We note the protest and will try to keep our minds open to all the pros and cons of the case when we come to consider it. Meanwhile we shall take idolatry first.

It is with a certain reluctance that we turn from an appreciation of the higher ideas in the ancient Chinese religion and of the speculations of Chinese philosophers to look into this matter of idolatry. In those ideas and speculations we see religious instinct and rational thought struggling upwards towards some central unity in which they can find satisfaction. Here, in idolatry, reason seems to be at a discount and the religious instinct to suffer a sad degradation, flowing out indiscriminately over a medley of objects and losing both its rational and its moral ingredients. Still, so much of the religious

life of the Chinese, from the most ancient days down to the present, has found expression in idolatry of one kind or another that we cannot omit idolatry from our purview. Such an omission might be justified were idolatry as dead in modern China as Druidism is in modern England. But China, as can be seen from any newspaper published there, is by no means all of a piece, and idolatry and modern learning co-exist within it, sometimes in even startling juxtaposition.

We here take the word idolatry in a wide sense, as including all that "bowing down to wood and stone," which is ascribed to "the heathen in his blindness," as covering, therefore, not only the worship of idols in the stricter sense, that is, simular representations of invisible beings, but also the worship of any material object as the medium of communication with some supernatural power. The subject, therefore, is enormously wide, nor is it possible to treat it in a strictly systematic way. There is no system in idolatry—that is one of the very first things we have to learn about it—but only an indefinite agglomeration of religious practices in which a more or less vague religious sense expresses itself. The underlying religious sense may be fundamentally one and capable of description and analysis. The expressions of it seem to be arbitrary and haphazard.

A mere enumeration of particular instances of such expression can never be complete and soon becomes wearisome. Something, however, must be said to indicate the nature of that with which we are dealing. It is evident to the most superficial

view that a spiritual world is a large element in the Chinese popular consciousness. Temples and way-side shrines, idols in houses and shops, incense-pots at the foot of trees and rocks, amulets worn round neck or wrist, charms on the ridge-pole of houses and over the lintels of doors, these are evidences, everywhere to be met with, of the belief in supernatural agents, gods, demons, sprites, and invisible influences. What then are some of the prevalent forms of idolatry in China to-day? We notice, first of all, idols in the stricter sense of that word, images, e.g., in human form—if the grotesqueness and frightfulness of some of them does not put them outside that description—representing members of the Pantheon. These divine or quasi-divine beings are numerous, some male, some female. If we distinguish their religious affinities, as Buddhist or as Taoist, we are doing more than most of their worshippers do. Some of them have appeared in history or legend at their purely human stage of existence before their post-mortem canonisation. Others of them have no such connection with the human race, but are personifications of the powers supposed to rule over this or that region of experience. Thus Kuan-ti, the God of War, is the apotheosis of a martial hero of the second century A.D., who was raised to the rank of a God in A.D. 1594. But a Goddess of Smallpox has no such historical root.

Worship is not confined to deified men or deities in the likeness of men. Idols in animal form, buffalo, for instance, or lion, are by no means unknown. The Fox-spirit is widely worshipped

in North China. Actually living animals may share in such worship. I have known an enormous sow become an object of worship, apparently merely because it was enormous. Such a worship may spring up in a quite haphazard way. A small snake, captured as it was escaping from a bundle of fuel and bottled alive, became, on the mere *ipse dixit* of its possessor, a temporary object of worship for a whole township. A man, too, may be worshipped during his lifetime, though this seems to be rare. Such worship is not mere flattery, a piece of conscious hypocrisy: nor does it involve a denial of the mortal humanity of the person worshipped; only there is acknowledged in him a mysterious something, over and above ordinary human nature.

Worship is accorded also to natural objects that we would regard as inanimate. Heaven, Heaven and Earth together as Father Heaven and Mother Earth, the sun, a constellation, a hill, a tree, a boulder, or the power inherent in each of these, is worshipped.

Some of these objects have been worshipped from ancient days. Others, not so antique, may yet have been worshipped for a long time and have won recognition throughout China, or at least over wide areas. Others may be of recent date and restricted reputation, confined perhaps to a single county or city or even village. Their popularity is subject to fluctuations. Any one of them may attract crowds of worshippers this year and next year be neglected. Even one and the same divinity, worshipped in many places, may be reported to be more active and responsive in one place than in

another, and so may have his temple here a place of concourse, while there it is deserted or dilapidated.

Through the mere lapse of time an object may become worshipful—an old tree for instance. It has even been suggested that to continue to offer worship to an object increases that quality which makes it worshipful, or, at least, makes it more powerful to help the worshipper. Why then, said a Christian convert, perhaps a little contemptuous of his old beliefs as converts sometimes are, why then do you not worship a plaster cat? It might keep rats away from your house—if you worshipped it long enough.

It is difficult to define this worshipful quality. Perhaps we may imagine it to be continuous, so to speak, with the quality of printed paper which makes it an object of reverence though not of worship, so that from the idol worshipped in the temple, or the mountain or tree to which incense is offered, down to the scrap of printed paper that is reverentially burned, each participates in a common supernatural quality like the mana of recent anthropology. However that may be, this quality seems, in all those cases in which it is worshipped—as the scrap of paper is not—to be personalised. The power in the object towards which worship is directed is not a thing to be manipulated by the worshipper, but is a being addressed by him and found to be responsive or deaf to his petitions. "Ask and there shall be fulfilment"; "Thanks to the spirit's grace," are common inscriptions on votive tablets dedicated by grateful worshippers to the powers they have worshipped. Such worshipful powers are

everywhere. That in ordinary circumstances no worship is offered in any particular spot is not any proof that no spiritual being is there ready to be acknowledged. A tree not worshipped heretofore will be worshipped to placate its genius before it is cut down. A cobble-stone in a street, disregarded by the hundreds who daily trample over it, will have incense offered to it by the anxious mother of the child who was tripped up by it or the mischievous demon in it. For, though we have spoken of "worship," it must be remembered that the spiritual beings worshipped are some of them good and some bad, benevolent, that is, or malevolent. Blessings are to be sought from the former. The latter are to be averted or placated. I have heard of the worship of one of this latter class, a kwei, in this case probably a malevolent human ghost, in which he was addressed euphemistically as a Sage. The more one is acquainted with this aspect of Chinese religious life the less is one disposed to quarrel with De Groot's description of it as frightful polydæmonism.

While, of course, such particulars as I have given are Chinese, this general view of the spiritual world has its parallels in other non-Christian countries, and, if we care to look for them, vestiges of it may still be found in countries that are called Christian. Regarding its special Chinese form there are several points that are worth noting.

The first is this, that it is truly Chinese. It is emphatically a Chinese religion. As we saw in our first chapter, the Classics record the worship of many spiritual beings. Some of those worshipped in the ancient days have fallen into desuetude—no

one now knows who, for instance, the Spirit of the Path was—and succeeding generations have brought many new objects within the sphere of worship. But the general view of the spiritual world has remained unchanged and unchallenged. Whatever primacy was ascribed to Shang-ti, he was not a jealous God in the Biblical sense. Satisfied with supremacy, he did not claim a monotheistic throne. There is no classical record of any protest on his behalf against the recognition of subordinate powers co-existent with himself. Such protest was lacking in Confucius and is equally lacking in Confucianists. At the most they disdain the popular idolatries. A son of one of the families of which Lady Hosie writes so interestingly in her *Two Gentlemen of China*, said to her, "For at least a hundred years not one of us has entered a temple to worship idols, and probably before that, for we have no record. We have only done official worship." As there has been no monotheistic protest from the side of religion, so neither has there been any such protest from the side of philosophic thought. Chinese thinking has, indeed, like all rational thought, reached up towards the unity of the cosmic principle. To such a unitary principle, whether we call it Tao or Li, idolatry may be a logical irrelevance, but it has never been banned as rationally indefensible. There has been no such religious or philosophic insight and interest as to cut the roots of polydæmonism or spiritism, which has, accordingly, persisted from the most ancient times down to the present day.

Another point specially noteworthy is the fact

that Chinese idolatry is free from gross immorality and in particular from any sexual taint. If there is any trace of this sexual evil, so prominent in some other idolatries, it is extremely slight. The whole mass of Chinese idolatry is rather non-moral than immoral. There is no goddess that is a harlot, and if there is a goddess of harlots that only shows how deep may run the division between religion and morality. In a lesser degree that is evidenced also by the lack of reverence so obvious in many Chinese temples. Yet it must be remembered that the inhabitants of the spiritual world, or some of them, are regarded as the vindicators of morality, and popular tracts are issued in their name exhorting men to good living, threatening evil doers and promising rewards to the obedient. The rewards promised are of a material rather than a heavenly nature, and equally material are the goods sought from the spiritual powers by their worshippers. Prayer for other than material blessings for one's self or one's family is practically unknown. Still, if the object worshipped has any recognisable moral character, spiritual benefit may not be entirely lacking from that form of idolatry. Professor Hodous speaks of the idea of Kwan Yin, the goddess of Mercy, as the creation of the social and religious consciousness of the women in China, and as revealing their aspirations for mercy, compassion, filial piety, and for the beauty that crowns a well-developed character (*Buddhism and Buddhists in China*, p. 32). So, too, I have heard a Chinese Christian distinguish between the respect which he professed his willingness to pay to the moral quality

of the human character of the deified person and the religious worship which he declined to pay to the divine status of the departed mortal. The distinction was admitted as valid by his non-Christian hearers, and the profession of his respect certainly abated their anti-Christian prejudice. Yet the moral character of the Being worshipped is, for the most part, unknown to the worshipper, and even when known is but little before his mind. The moral influence of idolatry is therefore small. What is kept alive even by idol worship is not so much moral as religious, a certain sense of dependence and of surrounding mystery, a religious temper which, however weak and ill-informed, has in it the possibility of that Christian piety which otherwise even Christian truth could never evoke.

We do not need to trouble ourselves with the details of the long history of Chinese idolatry, the dates, e.g., at which the various spiritual powers began or ceased to be worshipped; and just as little do we need to meddle with its geography, the range and distribution of the various cults, however important this kind of knowledge is for those who are dealing with the religious life of any particular district. We may content ourselves with noting that, while the use of images began prior to the introduction of Buddhism into China, it is conspicuously present in Buddhism, and in Taoism probably conforming in this to Buddhist example.

The Christian apologist may legitimately draw attention to the fact that never has a visible representation of Shang-ti been used in his worship. Though he will not make too much of this, bearing

in mind that so it is also in the worship of Earth and of Venerable Heaven, still it is undoubtedly to the good that, although there are anthropomorphic expressions in the Classics, Shang-ti has never been represented in visible form. This mitigates for the candid inquirer the strangeness of Christian worship with its lack of any visible representation of God, and takes the edge off the anti-Christian charge of atheism so far as that charge is based on the absence of images.

What was used in the worship of Shang-ti was not an image but a tablet on which his name was inscribed, and it is certain that Shang-ti was not identified in any way with the tablet, which serves only as a sort of locus for his august presence when duly invoked, and a sort of focus for the worship offered to him. But what of the visible objects that have place in popular worship? Are they worshipped or are they only means of worship? Here the answer is not quite simple. The mere carved block of wood, finished to the last touch of gold paint, is yet no worshipful idol. A ceremony of consecration is necessary before it becomes an object to be worshipped. After consecration, then, is the material idol itself worshipped, or the spirit of which it is the representation? Is the spirit conceived of as permanently attached to the idol, or there only potentially as a rule, but actually on the offering of worship? To questions of this kind it is difficult to get clear answers. The more intelligent worshipper would almost certainly deny that he worshipped the bare material object. But he would probably find little to say of the relation of the spirit he worships to the object which

serves as the medium of its worship, and still less of the relation of that same spirit to the hundreds of idols or other media by help of which it is worshipped by others. As to popular thought, it goes a long way, as one might expect, towards identifying spirit and idol. The sarcasm of an Isaiah is not out of place and is frequently copied with less literary finish by Christian converts, who make great play with the injurious and unresented treatment of idols by spiders or white ants or other vermin. Such arguments excite no hostility and are not repelled as beside the mark. The non-Christian mind accepts and is amused by them. I once heard this line of argument in a somewhat Rabelaisian form as I was being carried in a sedan-chair by two men, neither of them Christians. "Brother," shouted the one in front to his fellow in the rear, "these worshippers of Shang-ti say that the idols are no use." A grunt of understanding, if not of assent, came from the rear man. "I think there is something in what they say," he continued. Another grunt. "You see the idols do not really eat the offerings made them." Grunt. "It is clear that they don't, for if anything went into them, something would come out." The grunt this time gave way to a guffaw of amusement. Yet, of course, no intelligent idolater would ever contend that the gross matter of his offering was consumed by the spiritual object of his worship, but only that its fine essence is enjoyed by the spiritual being. By this contention we are transported to a region where assertion is easy and disproof impossible.

That such irreverent chaff of the idols is not popularly resented is so far proof that they are not reverenced. They are, however, greatly feared. De Groot has emphasised this aspect of popular religion. A Christian pedlar has confessed to me that in the early days of his Christian faith he never passed a temple in the dusk on his return from his rounds without a feeling of something uncanny which made him quicken his steps for safety's sake. The idols are powers. Often the Christian convert who has ceased to worship his household idols will invite a catechist or senior Christian to come to his house and invoke for him the protection of God before he ventures to remove them from their shrine. To his fears, if not to his faith, the beings he worshipped are still real; only God, His Heavenly Father, is more powerful than they.

It may be useful to note in passing that this positive belief in God is all that the Christian preacher need greatly concern himself about. Whether behind the idols there are spiritual beings or not is a question which he may leave open. It is not necessary to prove the negative.

This subordination of the idols to a supreme power is not exclusively Christian. Even the non-Christian confesses the inferiority of the idols to Heaven. In the spiritual world as he conceives it, with all its medley of powers, there is, as a background or controlling unity, Heaven, Heaven's decree, Fate, or whatever he may call it. The Christian preaching may well be an endeavour to bring this ultimate power into the foreground of consciousness, and to clothe it with the trust-

evoking and purifying qualities of Love and Goodness. The spiritual consciousness of the idolater thus contains an implicit witness to monotheism. For the most part, however, the multiplicity of powers is in the foreground of his thinking. Hence his religious life is open to distraction. He may as a rule worship a small circle of gods recommended to him by family tradition or some accidental circumstance, but in any emergency he may turn to some as yet untried divinity, "an unknown god." If his vows at this shrine are in vain, at that other they may obtain acceptance. Fundamentally, therefore, his religious life lacks assurance. There is a religious life, an acknowledgment of the spiritual world with which he is in vital relationship. He does not need to be argued out of atheism. Religion does not need to be planted in him, which might well be a hopeless task. But that which is in him needs to be purified and educated.

When we try to get down to the roots of his religious life we find as the tap-root that instinct of worship, that sense of the sacred, which seems to be an ineradicable constituent of human nature. Without that, there would be no religious life at all, however rudimentary or debased. In addition there is fear or apprehensiveness, from which arises a seeking for prosperity or protection. The soul of man, in which there are this instinct of worship and this apprehensiveness, placed in the midst of this universe, vast, beautiful, awful, mysterious, seems to be at the mercy of accident to determine the object from which it will seek in a religious way its security or success. Hence the

apparent arbitrariness of the manifestations of religion. Possibly by an induction from particulars one can find what qualities—size or strangeness or strength—seem most to evoke a religious regard, or, with increasing insight, qualities more moral than these.

Into the religious world of the idolater, largely non-moral, seeking only material goods from the accidentally-determined objects of his worship, the Christian preacher seeks to introduce the Christian conception of God. To this the religious instinct can attach itself and, finding, as nowhere else, its appropriate nutriment, can grow. To begin with there may seem to be no great advance on its pre-Christian stage. "The Heavenly Father" is appealed to even as the idols were. He takes the place in domestic affairs from which they have been deposed—healer of sickness, finder of lost chickens, giver of a good litter of pigs. But also from the beginning, higher elements, rational and moral, are not wanting. The religious life is centred on one object, this life and the life to come are brought under His sway: His character is dimly apprehended, its moral demands are responded to, and, as the revelation of Him in Jesus Christ is progressively apprehended, His adequacy for the religious life of His children is increasingly manifest.

We turn now to our second topic, ancestor-worship. "To it," as has been well said, "cling the most reverent thoughts, the deepest experiences of the Chinese religious mind. It has the sanction of antiquity. It represents a rooted belief in immortality, though more of the clan than of the indi-

vidual. It calls to mind the links which bind a man alike with his past and his future, and enshrines that sense of ancestry, heritage and destiny which go to make greatness in nation and individual. It is the Stage of the Chinese Soul; the setting in which Hero and Sage alike visualise their life. In it is embedded that immortality of fame, 'that last infirmity of noble mind,' which great souls desire and prize above riches. A man sees himself one with an ancestry in whose glory he rejoices: and they for his life become 'the great cloud of witnesses,' spurring him on to high endeavour; and after him comes the line of those descendants who will be inspired and glorified in him, and in whom his deathless memory is to be perpetuated" (T. W. Douglas James, *Chinese Recorder*, Nov. 1925).

We turn now to our second topic, ancestor worship. A practice for which so much can be said merits our careful and sympathetic consideration. To begin with, then, like idolatry, ancestor worship has its roots in the prehistoric life of China. It antedates our most ancient records, in which it has left abundant traces of an already vigorous existence. In the Book of History and the Book of Odes one finds, for instance, that to the ancestors solemn announcement was made of the beginning and end of important undertakings: success is attributed to their virtue: to them offerings were made and prayers presented. Ancestors of both sexes participated in such honours and were supposed to find rest and satisfaction in them. In one of the odes there is a description of such ceremonies from which it is sufficient to quote a few clauses.

"All the service is complete and brilliant. Grandly come our progenitors: their spirits happily enjoy the offerings: their filial descendant receives blessings. They will reward him with great happiness; with myriads of years, life without end."

From those early times the worship of ancestors has persisted, no doubt with some change of form, down to the present. It is not necessary to trace the history of the practice or to describe all the ritual of the dead of which ancestor worship as usually understood is one item. A superabundance, almost, of detail can be found as to ancient times in the Li Ki (and I-li), and as to present-day practices in De Groot's work, *The Religious System of China*.

The fact of change in the ritual should be noted. The slaughter of human beings to accompany the deceased to the other world, though it survived into historic times, was killed by moral criticism. If we may accept the statement—which is not above suspicion—that Confucius was for many years ignorant of his father's grave, then it is clear that he did not scrupulously conform to what are at least present-day requirements. The old custom of having a personator of the dead to whom, as representing them, offerings were made, was in its day an innovation, and has been abandoned from of old. The ancestral tablet, at least in its present form, seems to be a comparative novelty. Points like these may, as one can easily see, be useful in an apologetic interest in separating the permanent principle of filial piety from its customary and changing expression.

Ancestor worship, as a practice having all the

prestige of immemorial antiquity, has a tremendous hold on the Chinese. Every missionary admits that if Christianity cannot tolerate ancestor worship it will find it to be a much tougher opponent than idolatry. It is or was a common twofold charge against Christians that they repudiated both Spirits and Parents, but the latter item is the heavier. While, as we have seen, rough ridicule of the idols may excite only a laugh, one has to speak much more warily in criticism of ancestor worship. The Christian's worship of Shang-ti, though he worships without visible symbol, may rebut the charge of atheism; but he has not found it so easy, as a rule, to clear himself from the charge of impiety, and filial piety is so fundamental in Chinese ethics and so dominates the Chinese scale of values that anything that seems contrary to it excites the greatest abhorrence.

It is time, however, that we should attempt to set out the various elements that find expression in ancestor worship, and, though such worship is offered before the coffin and at the grave and not only before the tablet, we may almost confine our attention to the worship of which the tablet is the focus. The origin of the tablet, according to one story, is not altogether to its credit. The too-late repentance of an unfilial son devised it so that before it he might perform those acts of piety which he had withheld from his parents while they lived. Whatever its origin may have been, the tablet in present practice offers us a very remarkable parallel to the idol. We should not go far wrong in saying that as is the idol to the spirit it represents so is the

tablet to the Manes of the deceased. As the carved, painted and gilded image is yet no idol until it has been consecrated, so the tablet, properly inscribed and with the name and other particulars of the deceased written on it, still lacks something. Some qualified person, a scholar or someone of importance, must be employed to add a red dot to one of the characters, which by this addition comes to mean "that in which the spirit dwells." Thus, by a living person, the departed soul is called back. Before making the dot the writer breathes upon the pencil and uses the following words: "The spirit rests in this wooden tablet, and the wooden tablet is spiritualised by its resting. The spirit and the wood together dwell in ages of unending spring" (*Conference*, 1907, p. 228). In some parts of China the red dot is made with the blood of the sons of the deceased. The details of the ceremony may differ in different places, but everywhere some such ceremony is needed if the tablet is to become the abode of the spirit. According to the Chinese scholar whose words I have been quoting from the *Records of the Centenary Missionary Conference held in Shanghai in* 1907, one use of the tablet is to be the abode of the spirit which otherwise might be desolate and without any settled place. The other use is to keep the deceased in constant remembrance before the eyes of his living descendant. There seems no reason why it should not have this second use without the dotting ceremony; but it is easy to see that because of this dotting ceremony the tablet, if "not a fetish," is certainly "more than a memorial."

The parallel between the ancestral tablet and the idol may be carried beyond the initial consecration to the use made of each in worship. If the idol is not worshipped, but only the Spiritual Power connected with it, so neither is the tablet worshipped, but the ancestor's spirit, supposed to rest in the tablet, at least during the time of worship. In the case of both idol and tablet, the offerings and prayers—if prayers are uttered—are made to the spiritual being connected with the material medium. As in the one case the divinity, so in the other case the departed spirit, is supposed to enjoy the offerings and hear the prayers. It is to this point that both filial piety and personal selfishness can attach themselves. On the one hand it is a duty of filial piety to provide that without which the departed spirit would be restless and dissatisfied. Indeed, without the offerings on the essence of which they are nourished, the spirits might literally starve and pine away. There is on the basis of this belief a strong pull on the filial piety of sons and grandsons to provide these offerings. One may perhaps without offence refer by way of analogy to the dutiful pressure felt by a pious Roman Catholic to provide masses for the souls of his parents, though, of course, such masses have a still closer Chinese parallel in those Taoist and Buddhist services by which the souls of the departed are rescued from post-mortem pains. In all such cases, given a belief that the welfare of the departed depends on the performance by the living of certain actions, it is easy to understand how scrupulously filial piety will see that those actions are performed, and how terribly it will be

shocked by their omission. But just here, self-regarding motives find an opening in more ways than one. The apprehensive parent is horrified by the prospect of his spirit being left desolate in the dim realm of ghosts, deprived of those filial offices by which it is nourished and kept in touch with this dear familiar world. We may guess that this apprehensive horror partly explains why the worship of ancestors is a much more tender topic than the worship of idols. If the idols are not worshipped that is their affair. "Let Baal see to it." But what father of a family is going to tolerate a pestilent heresy like Christianity which threatens to deprive his departed spirit of the pious ministrations of sons and grandsons? Some regard to self may actuate the son also, and that in two ways. To begin with, the spirits of the ancestors being supposed to be present, prayers are offered to them—"O our forefathers, send down blessings without limit"—or at least the sacrifices are regarded as unspoken prayers for the family welfare, the health and material well-being of its members. The worship is not disinterested: it is interested selfishly and not in that noble way of seeking furtherance of a spiritual good in which both worshipper and worshipped share. And this self-regard comes in also in a more ignoble way. I can recall a conversation with a young fellow, one of the clean-limbed, hard-working young villagers who are so attractive. In answer to a question why he worshipped his ancestors, the first thing that came to his lips was, "Because if I don't, they will give me a bad time." Dr J. C. Gibson was not going beyond the facts when he said that

there " is in much of the popular ancestor worship an element that is nothing less than horrible and shocking to every instinct of natural piety. These rites, so far from being services of reverence and love, are often expressions of fear and horror at the dreaded return to earth of the spirits of the departed, who had been loved and reverenced when here " (*Conference Report*, 1907, p. 620). In so far as this is true, and true it is in great measure, we may see underlying ancestor worship the Confucian injunction, " Reverence the spirits but keep at a distance from them "—uncanny and incalculable as they are. How different from the feeling of an old Christian lady I knew who, when surprise was expressed at her living alone in a house full of memories of the departed, placidly replied, " Why should I fear the spirits of the blessed dead? " Still, for the Chinese too, the presence of genuine filial piety, the continuance towards the departed of that love and reverence which waited on them while they were here, need not be doubted. In the feast of forlorn ghosts there is perhaps more of the desire to placate spirits who, lacking filial offerings, might inflict indiscriminate harm, though possibly also, taking the place of filial piety, a certain compassion for their destitute state.

It would be quite unfair to pass on to further criticism without mentioning the very important social side of ancestor worship. The ancestral temple becomes the centre of clan life, and the anniversaries and other stated times of ancestor worship, in the temple or at the grave, are occasions

for family and clan gatherings which help to keep fresh and strong the ties of kinship.

In this whole cult, in so far as it is not mere unthinking compliance with custom, various motives of very different values may be operative—filial piety, clan feeling, self-regarding hopes and fears. How, then, are we Christians to regard it? It is obviously open to criticism from various angles. It is exposed to a rationalistic attack. The whole Chinese view of the after-life lies in hopeless confusion. In the ancient days the spirits of the departed might be thought of as continuing to exist in a dim, unrationalised and unmoralised world of the shades, from which they could emerge when evoked. But such a primitive view has been thrown into confusion by the intrusion of alien ideas of moral retribution, of heaven and hell and of transmigration. Neither philosophic speculation nor popular thinking has introduced any certainty or much order into this region of existence. The conception of each individual having three souls has been pressed into service to this extent, that they can be allotted one to the tablet, one to the grave, one to the other world. But to the questions, which of these is the real person; or does death produce by fission three complete and distinct prolongations of the one personality known during life—to these and the like questions no answer can be given. From this same rationalistic side, the Christian convert, sometimes, exercising his wit on the beliefs he has discarded, will object that the offerings are certainly not eaten by the ancestors, and that even if they were, four meals or so in the

course of a year is a poor substitute for three meals a day; and that in any case ancestors beyond a very few generations are totally unprovided for. But it is always possible to turn the edge of such criticism by the assertion that disembodied spirits feed only on that essence of the offerings which is as imperceptible as themselves, and of such essential food require only infrequent reinforcement; while as for the remoter ancestors, they are not provided for because in fact they in course of time are gradually dissipated and cease to exist at all. Such discussion has no end, for in all this region of ideas statement and counter-statement are alike incapable of proof. Just for this reason the cult of ancestors, with all argumentation pro and con regarding it, is apt to be swept impatiently aside by the modern scientific mind. The Christian apologist need not perhaps say, "Non tali auxilio," but he will be wise to recognise that, while such criticism may expose the incoherence of traditional Chinese ideas of the after-life, it cannot establish the truth of those Christian ideas he would fain substitute for them. He may prefer, therefore, for his part to bring certain moral and religious considerations to bear upon them. It may, e.g., be fairly urged that ancestor worship does not give adequate expression to that natural affection by which it seeks to be justified. No adequate provision is made for the expression of the affection of a parent for a deceased child or of a husband for a deceased wife. The present practice is not wide enough to cover all family relationships. It is a valid charge also that ancestor worship tends to degrade woman, partly

because male descendants only are allowed to perform the rites (though China is not the only country where to be of the female sex is a ritual disqualification), but still more because of the emphasis on having offspring in order that the continuance of the rites may be assured. I once heard a wife's place in the family economy defined as that of "boiling rice and bearing children," and though the phrase came from the lips of a Christian it expressed his old infra-Christian mind, a mind which happily is often transcended even in non-Christian families. Still, ancestor worship does lay tremendous stress on the function of bearing children, and if a wife fails in this, then its requirements demand concubinage or adoption; and where both courses are open, concubinage, backed by the sexual instinct, often wins the day and brings all its attendant evils with it, its emphasis on the physical relation between man and woman, its encouragement of concubinage even where the wife is not childless, its frequent issue in domestic disharmony.

It is a further objection to the practice of ancestor worship that it is unfriendly to progress, and is more adapted to village clan societies than to modern conditions. "No nation without a conservative bias would revere its ancestors as does China. No nation could revere its ancestors as China does, without becoming more conservative" (*Conference Report*, Shanghai, 1922, p. 149). This objection it may be difficult to meet fully, but it admits of some qualification. The old village life had its good points, and modern conditions are not necessarily and in all respects an improvement, and to be ill-suited to

modern conditions is, therefore, not a conclusive criticism. Again, though ancestor worship may have a conservative influence, there does not seem to be any strict logical connection between filial piety and rigid adherence to all ancestral ways. The fault may lie in such an interpretation of filial piety as first identifies it with refusal to advance beyond a father's positions, and then makes it superior to the claims of newly-discerned truth. As we have seen, even Confucius made room for filial remonstrance, and whatever was a proper occasion of remonstrance when the parent was alive can hardly be matter of duty once the parent is dead. Moreover, since the ritual of ancestor worship has been changed, even though it were long ago, it might conceivably be so changed again as to allow of sons in far-off lands and cities keeping their memorial days with replicas of the penates in the ancestral home.

A still further objection to ancestor worship is that it is indifferent to moral valuations, since any parent, good or bad, must be worshipped in the same way. The point of this objection is the equality of worship of good and bad parents, whatever " worship " may mean. Whatever force there be in this, we must be careful in dealing with it, both lest we suggest that the badness of a father discharges his son from all the duties of filial piety, and lest we make eschatological assumptions equally unwarrantable and unacceptable. It is important, of course, to recognise that moral distinctions are carried forward into the other world. But it is difficult, without an intolerable strain on the feelings, to carry through any application of this principle

unless in a Christian setting. And when one is up against the facts this Christian setting must be both very definite and very indefinite. That moral distinctions are of infinite import for weal or woe, that this life is morally continuous with the next, that both in this world and the next the souls of all men are in the wise and loving and patient hands of God—in those points the Christian view is definite, and in almost all else absolutely indefinite. This view does in fact commend itself as against the confused, inconsistent, irrational view which China has—a view which is ultimately hopeless, except for such light as we shall find in a later chapter Buddhism may afford.

I have indicated some of the criticism that might be brought against ancestor worship on intellectual and ethical grounds. There remains a religious objection, which is for us the most important of all. Ancestor worship is, of course, not to be condemned simply because it is called "worship." The Chinese word covers a wide range of meaning and may mean nothing more un-Christian than what we are guilty of when, as citizens of an English borough, we speak of "His Worship the Mayor." The Jesuit missionaries who would have allowed ancestor worship as a purely secular function founded themselves on the classical dictum that the worshippers "served the dead as they would have served them alive." In reply Dr Legge points out that "Sacrifice is an entirely new element, introduced into the service of the dead" (*Doct. of the Mean*, xix). It has also been pointed out that the prayers offered in ancestor worship are not for the dead, but to the

dead, and that this is a kind of worship in which no Christian can take part. But this hardly hits the nail on the head. At least if prayer to the dead is based on the belief that they "can, through their prayers to Heaven, bless or harm their descendants," then prayer to them does not seem any more incompatible with Christianity than prayer to the Saints. I confess that I do not know any evidence of this conception of the dead as praying to Heaven for the living, and I wonder whether it is more than a patch sewn on to the fabric of Chinese ideas by some logical mind which inferred that if there is a supreme controlling Heaven, the dead can only bless or harm by Heaven's permission. But in any case, since God has so ordered it that in this life children can offer and request and parents receive and respond, is there any *a priori* reason why the same relation should not continue when one of the related persons has passed into the unseen? While allowing human interdependence here, is God so jealous of His rights in the unseen world that no petition, prayer or request is to be made of anyone but of Him only? Whether in fact such requests are made and responded to is quite a different matter. I only suggest that neither their impossibility nor their impiety can be concluded *a priori* from the idea of God.

The real objection to ancestor worship is more subtle, more difficult to express. It is that the Spirits of the dead have for the worshipper the value of God: that just as in idolatry—one cannot blink the parallel—so also there is in ancestor worship that which perturbs the unique religious

relation between the soul and God. It is, perhaps, not sufficient to say that the worshipper thinks of the Manes under the category of the Sacred. It is rather that there is something of that awe in his attitude to them which is only proper towards the Divine. Perhaps, to adopt a suggestion of Sir Henry Jones, every worshipper is for the time a henotheist, the being worshipped occupying for him the whole sphere of the Divine so far as practical interests are concerned, though theoretically and when he is outside the region of worship, he might admit many other Divine Beings and even one Supreme Divine Being.

It is, I believe, a sense of this unwarrantable intrusion into the region of the Divine that lies behind the stiff attitude of many Chinese Christians on this matter. It is the danger of this intrusion that needs to be guarded against, and the sense of the danger may be so acute as to lead to excessive precautions. I have known a body of Chinese office-bearers in the Church discuss whether portrait-painting was a legitimate occupation for a Christian, seeing that a portrait might be used in a son's worship of his father. Quite recently a Church Court in South China discussed and forbade the practice of bowing before a coffin—a practice which we might think as harmless as our baring of our heads as a funeral passes. But of course a ceremonial takes its meaning from its associations, and the decision of the Church Court may, in the actual circumstances, have been right. Certainly the Christian Church, if it forbids the traditional expressions of filial piety, must all the more provide forms in which filial piety

can fully express itself. Whether absolutely new forms must be found, or the old forms can be so purged as to be fit for use in the Christian community, is a difficult question. The old forms are not easily emptied of their associations, or the associations, being expelled, insidiously creep in again. It was probably true wisdom for the infant Church in China to make a clear cut with all the associations of ancestor worship. Now that she is stronger she may perhaps assume a more conciliatory attitude; but not without danger.

It is not a matter merely of ecclesiastical arrangements, but of a Christian society. In one way or other it must be made clear to all that in Christianity filial piety finds its rightful place among the virtues of human character and the arrangements of human society. A critic of missions in China has suggested that Christianity is here hopelessly out of agreement with the Chinese mind, because in the face of the deeply implanted sentiment of reverence for parents, it is a shock to the Chinese to be told that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. I am not quite clear as to the supposed point of collision between Christianity and Chinese opinion. When one thinks of the context of the Biblical quotation both in the Old and in the New Testament, it is difficult to see that the saying shuts up the Christian to the separate family life characteristic of our Western civilisation, and commits him to a crusade against the more or less patriarchal system of China—a system which, Christianity apart, is breaking down under modern conditions. The original aim of the saying quoted seems to

have been to emphasise the union of one man and one woman as the formation, to put it so, of a new cell in the social organism, a thing that has a right to exist and must not be disrupted by any capricious divorce; and this interpretation would probably be accepted by the Chinese conscience. Of course in its application questions will arise in China and elsewhere. What, for instance, is capricious divorce? Christianity and Confucianism alike realise the value both of reverence for parents and of the marriage bond; but in a case of apparent conflict between these values, they might come to different decisions. If Christianity would disallow, Confucianism certainly would permit divorce at the mandate of a parent. Conflict is inevitable, but conflict is not defeat. Christianity has already faced similar opposition and yet has never ceased to make headway in the displacement of what was hostile to it. So it will be in China, or wherever custom is fundamentally opposed to the Christian spirit. And it is well to remind ourselves that Chinese society is not the only existing society in which Christianity may meet that which it cannot tolerate. Our own social arrangements may embody a scale of values which is not absolutely correct, and it may be that Chinese Christianity will detect in us inconsistencies to which we ourselves are blind and provoke us to their correction.

A further suggestion is made by the same critic, that Chinese filial piety will refuse to listen to a religion which teaches that if a man leave father and mother for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, he will receive a hundredfold now in this time and in

the world to come eternal life. This implies, of course, a stringent claim, and where Jesus in making it said, "He that hateth not his father and mother . . . yea and his own life also, cannot be my disciple," the "Delegates" version of the New Testament, rightly or wrongly, modified its expression. But, in fact, here there can be no compromise, and Christianity has nothing for which to apologise. Jesus Christ claims, as of right, absolute obedience, which will be willingly rendered by those who see Him for what He is, and can be rendered by none other. Happily for our hopes of Christianity in China, Chinese history does not lack noble examples of those who for truth and duty's sake have surrendered this present life, with father and mother and all else that was dear to them, without being charged with impiety; and if a Chinese comes to see in Christ the same absolute value, he will be prepared to make the same sacrifice, and may claim the same absolution even from those who think him mistaken.

At any rate here there can be no compromise, and in China as elsewhere Jesus Christ will find disciples who shall be as leaven; nor can we doubt that the Spirit of Him who, in the supreme hour of His sacrifice, said to His mother, "Behold thy son," and to the disciple, "Behold thy mother," will through them gradually create a society in which filial piety and fidelity to truth may alike flourish.

CHAPTER VII

Chinese Ideas of Salvation

What lies behind all the missionary activity of the Christian Church is the conviction that the Church is in a unique sense the herald of Salvation for the whole human race. Salvation, however, is not exclusively a Christian idea. "The three religions," so a Chinese writer is quoted as saying, "differ in their doctrines, yet as to the aim, to save mankind, they are at one. In Buddhism no personage holds so large a place in saving mankind as Kwan-shi-yin. In Taoism there is no one equal to Lu Ch'un Yang. In the Ju Kiau (Confucianism) there is no one to be compared with Confucius and Mencius." Our business now is to examine the conceptions of Salvation found in these three Chinese religions, that we may see what human longings find expression in them, and how these longings find full satisfaction only in the Salvation which is ours in Christ. If this latter point is made good, then we shall have established, in the only sense in which we care to establish it, the Christian conviction that there is none other name but His under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

We begin our examination with Confucianism, starting, as we did in examining the idea of Shang-ti, not with Confucius himself, but with those ancient

Classics which are the repositories of the ideas to which Confucius and all his school serve themselves heirs. In approaching these ancient books it is well to dismiss for a time from our minds the glories of the New Testament idea of Salvation. We shall thus be better able to discern any faint glimmer of hope which we might otherwise miss in the shining of that "marvellous light." If, even so, we can find no more than a very meagre conception of Salvation, let us, in our endeavour to be just, ask ourselves what conception of Salvation a Moses or a Samuel or any ordinary Hebrew of those days may have had.

Taking the Chinese Classics even in this way, one may perhaps say that it is possible to read them through without the idea of Salvation being so much as suggested to one's mind. If, however, we provisionally define Salvation as the attainment of the perfect life, then there is a section of the Book of History, dated about 1100 B.C., which is not irrelevant to our inquiry. There we find enumerated the five happinesses, the conjunction of which we may take as making up for these ancient Chinese the *summum bonum*. They are long life, riches, soundness of body and serenity of mind (*mens sana in corpore sano*), love of virtue, and an end crowning the life. By way of elucidation we may set over against these five happinesses what are called "the six extremities"; life broken off by misfortune, sickness, sorrow, poverty, wickedness, weakness. What we may gather from these two enumerations is perhaps this, that the man who is to be pronounced "blessed" is one who has completed his natural span of life, with a competency, in freedom from

distressing disease or calamity, who has been a good man, and dies only when every legitimate ambition has been fulfilled. Standing by the grave of such a one, we would be entitled to call him "happy." The items of happiness are all mundane, though, of course, the goodness of Heaven may be acknowledged in them. They are, as one commentator says, "by the doing of Heaven and not from any arrangement of men"; even love of virtue, for instance, is traced to a good natural disposition and circumstances favourable to its development. We may certainly take it that there was in the minds of those who thus thought about the goods of human life a recognition of Heaven as the ultimate disposer of events, only in obedience to whose will, revealed chiefly in the constitution of human nature, could one expect to enjoy these happinesses. The Old Testament saint spoke of seeing the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, and no doubt to the ancient Chinese also the five happinesses exemplified the goodness of Heaven. It may be questioned, indeed, how far this religious reference constituted for the Chinese, as it did for the Hebrew, a sort of bloom upon them which enhanced their value. But if the Old Testament saint and the ancient Chinese differed here, they were alike at least in this, that "the land of the living" was the sphere in which this goodness was to be enjoyed. Existence after death entered very little into the account. The Sheol to which Samuel and Saul were alike gathered was, at best, a very neutral state of existence; and the fate of the departed was not more clear to the ancient Chinese. They might

think of departed monarchs and their ministers as subsisting in the world beyond, and even the ordinary mortal, if ancestor worship meant anything, was not excluded from a share in such subsistence. But it was very vaguely conceived. The welfare of those who shared in it was in some sense dependent on the welfare of their descendants, a reflection, one might say, of their descendants' happiness. Moral distinctions were not explicitly carried forward into that other world, and so neither did there break from it into this world any repercussions of glorious hopes or awful fears.

To the ideas of the ancient Classics on the subject of Salvation the teaching of Confucius and Mencius and the whole later Confucian School added little. What is chiefly remarkable here is the emphasis laid on morality. The moral life is the true life. Righteousness is to be preferred above riches and every material good. Deprivation of goods and frustration of desire may be part of the discipline by which Heaven trains men for their tasks. Virtue is to be preferred above life itself, and there are moral heroes who perfect their virtue by the sacrifice of their lives. In accordance with these ideas, what Confucianism offers for the individual is the stimulus of precept and example in the effort to harmonise one's own nature as a basis for harmonising one's social relations. Such an awakening to righteousness is a great good, and profound gratitude is due to the moral teacher through whom it comes to us. But it is not in itself Salvation. It needs to be completed in an assured harmony with the world. This harmony Confucianism affirmed even

though it could not make it good. The affirmation is there, for the Confucian emphasis on morality springs from a profound conviction of the moral constitution of the world, a conviction which expresses itself also in a belief in the prosperity of the righteous, and the calamities that overtake the wicked in this world. But it is a perpetual wonder as well as a crowning evidence of the hold of morality on mankind, that to the Chinese, as to Israel, this belief maintained itself in face of patent contradiction by the fortunes of men. The same contradiction lies implicit in the noble summons to lay down life for righteousness' sake. Neither in ancient Israel nor in ancient China was the other world called in to solve the paradox. Of this paradox Confucius himself is one great illustration. Our last glimpse of him is of an old man whose days had been full of trouble, looking out upon a world in which his principles had as yet no sway, crooning to himself, "the great mountain must crumble, the strong beam must break, and the wise man wither away like a plant," and so laying himself down to die. "Is this thing that we see Salvation?" asks Browning; and, whatever rejoinder may be open to the Christian, the Confucian at least cannot make out a satisfactory answer by turning from these visible circumstances to the world invisible, since of that Confucius professed no knowledge; nor, I think, can he legitimately appeal to the later triumph of Confucian principles and to the deification of Confucius himself, when, on his own confession, he cannot know whether Confucius any longer has a conscious existence in which he may enjoy the

victory of his cause or the honour to himself. The Christian hope for man, at which Browning's question was originally directed, cannot indeed escape its challenge, but it has an answer not open to the Confucian, "We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." This absolute supremacy of the spiritual realised in humanity, which may, therefore, for men be called salvation, is not seen in Confucius and cannot be affirmed of him. There is an anticipation of it in that transformation of this present world which the advent of the Ideal Man introduces. Even here, as we have seen, there is no promise of permanency either for him or for it. Still, so far as it is the ultimate reach of Confucian hope we may regard it as the state of Salvation, and the Ideal Man who brings it in as the Saviour of his fellows. He, if we could find him, has more claim to this title than Confucius or Mencius, who are ministers of Salvation only in that limited but honourable sense in which every earnest preacher of righteousness is so.

The Taoism of the Tao Teh King gives us somewhat similar ideas of what may be called Salvation in what it says of the harmonising of the inner life of the individual and the transformation effected by the Taoist sage under whose influence the Golden Age returns. In addition to these ideas, however, there is the emphasis on the idea of permanency, and, though the references to death in the Tao Teh King are enigmatical, a line is at least suggested by it which late Taoism followed in its persistent search for the elixir of Immortality. To say, as is some-

times done, that immortality is not an oriental aspiration, is only another illustration of the vagueness that surrounds that word "oriental." In the later Taoism there developed also a belief in the possibility of deliverance from the maleficent sway of evil spirits. Hence a new conception of Salvation emerged. Lu Ch'un Yang, whom our Chinese writer mentions as without equal in Taoism in this matter of saving men, is described as one who understood the "mysteries of alchemy and the magic formula of the elixir of life," and who, being invested with a sword of supernatural power, "traversed the Empire slaying dragons and ridding the earth of divers kinds of evil during a period of upwards of 400 years." Here, then, is a Saviour of a distinct type. It would be unfair to say of him that moral considerations have dropped away entirely, for he is said to have met and overcome a series of temptations before he was invested with his supernatural powers; but it is evident that, in the effecting of Salvation, morality is almost entirely supplanted by magic. The whole narrative moves in the realm of fancy, nor can anyone be seriously asked to believe that he now makes good his saving power, even for the confraternity of barbers, of whom he is the patron deity.

It is sufficiently obvious that neither Confucianism nor Taoism can set up any serious rival to the Christian idea of Salvation. There remains Buddhism, in this respect as in some others a more serious competitor. "Even as the ocean has everywhere but one taste, that of salt," said Buddha, "so my doctrine has everywhere but one essence, that of

deliverance." It will have been noted, however, that our Chinese author did not name Buddha in connection with the work of saving mankind, but put forward Kwan-shi-yin. This displacement of Buddha from the focus of the religion which is still called after his name will not surprise anyone who is acquainted with the difference between the Northern and the Southern Buddhism, the Mahayana and the Hinayana Schools. One must not so exaggerate the difference as to cut the historical connection between them, but the Northern type of Buddhism in its most characteristic and popular features diverges so much from the Southern type as to be a new religion. The Hinayana traces suffering to desire, and the way of escape, therefore, is the extinction of desire. This state of desire extinguished is Nirvana, which is to be attained by each one for himself by the eightfold path and is attainable only by the professed monk. There is in this system no room for a god or for any religious attitude to a god. The Mahayana, on the other hand, recognises the sorrows of the world, but speaks of salvation as life in a heavenly world of pure souls. It recognises divine beings who, out of compassion, make salvation possible, not to the monk only, but to all devout souls. Among these beings is Kwan-shi-yin, the Goddess of Mercy. In the Hinayana we have a doctrine austerely individualistic, and atheistic, in the Mahayana a doctrine more gracious and theistict. Is probably true to say that the growth of this latter doctrine is a valid criticism of the former as failing to meet the needs of the human heart. In so far

as this is true, the fact that it has grown in Confucian lands is a criticism also of Confucianism. If any connection between Mahayana and Christianity could be made out, it would be interesting; but Mahayana is even more interesting if it is a spontaneous growth. Then it speaks more powerfully of the inextinguishable needs of the human spirit. The Mahayana has been spoken of as "a bridge between the Hinayana and Christianity." But though it appears to approach Christianity it must be judged in the light of its own presuppositions. Of this aspect of the matter we shall speak later. Meantime our concern is just with those popular and characteristic features in which its differences from the Hinayana are most conspicuous.

As an example of these popular features I take a tract of a kind that seems to be common. The copy from which I quote came from South China not so many years ago. I know that it circulates in Central China. The same or a very similar tract is quoted by Beal in his *Chinese Buddhism*, published in 1884. The tract shows the outline of a boat with sail fully spread to a favouring wind. Under the control of heavenly beings it is carrying the pious on their way, as flags fore and aft inform us, to the Western Region, the land of exceeding bliss. The border of the whole tract and the outline of the boat is made up of small blank circles. The title of the tract is, "A-mi-to Buddha conducts good folk who "nien Fo" to live in the Western Region." Fo is, of course, Buddha. What "nien" may mean, we shall see. The Divine Being whom the tract celebrates is not Kwan-shi-yin, whom our

Chinese authority mentioned as the Buddhist exemplar of Saviourhood, but A-mi-to (Amitabha) serves equally well as a focus for the salvation ideas of Mahayana Buddhism. The printed matter on the tract explains that the Western Region is a world of exceeding joy, the pure Buddha land. Of all the eighty-four thousand ways of attaining this happy land the absolutely first is that of "nien Fo." Other methods may be compared to an ant climbing a lofty hill; in an hour it may advance a pace. But this way is like sailing with favourable wind and tide, in one moment a thousand furlongs. Once entrance is gained to the Western Region there is no lapse from it. The highest of its inhabitants attain the rank of Buddhas; the lowest excel "the heavenly officers." The merit of this method is great; its practice is easy. Noble or mean, intelligent or stupid, old or young, male or female, vegetarian or non-vegetarian, leading the family life or having abandoned it, all can practise it. A respectful exhortation is addressed to all good men and believing women everywhere, whose destiny it is to fall in with this tract, that they at once respond by faith, with undivided heart "nien Fo," and seek life in the Western Region. If, perchance, anyone is entangled in family affairs, the cords of the world not being broken, so that it is impossible to give to this matter an undivided heart, let him each day nien three thousand or five thousand times as a regular practice. If this is still beyond his power, let him as his vow use this tract. After one hundred nien let him fill up one of the small circles. When all the circles are filled the total of his "nien" will be

one hundred and fifty thousand. Whether he seeks life in the Western Region on his own behalf or on behalf of his parents, or seeks their health and comfort, the increase of their happiness or the certainty of long life for them, let him in Buddha's presence burn this tract: or, on behalf of departed parents or relatives, he may before their tablets or at the grave burn the tract in Buddha's presence: in thanking the Spirits, in worshipping the ancestors, at the various festivals, at forlorn graves and in public cemeteries to rescue forlorn souls devoid of offerings, in all these cases we may rely on Buddha's strength to transport them to the Pure Land. Be it one such vow, be it many vows, according to one's ability, the merit thus obtained is more than thought can grasp.

On the boat's sail there is an inscription to this effect: "One A-mi-to is the precious sword that smites the hosts of evil: one A-mi-to is the warrior who breaks open Hell: the bright lamp that illumines darkness: the boat of mercy that ferries across the bitter sea: the pathway of escape from the round of transmigration: the method of deliverance from the succession of life and death: the secret recipe for becoming an immortal: the divine medicine for bodily transformation. All methods are summed up here. All entanglements are severed at one stroke. Nien one Mi-to and, without lifting a finger, you arrive at the Western Region."

It is not difficult to see the attractiveness of what is here put forward. To weak and suffering humanity is offered a blessed and everlasting state, and a way to it is disclosed which is not beyond one's

strength. "Heaven and the Way to it," might describe this Buddhist Gospel as well as the Christian. Christianity is not the only religion that seeks to console human sorrow with the hope of a Land of Pure Delight; and no one who knows how great that sorrow is will belittle such a hope. One point about this Buddhist hope is worth noting. The promise is that once entrance is gained to the Western Region there is no lapse from it. This hope therefore, as indeed the tract explicitly states, breaks the circle of transmigration, and its admission is ample precedent for the presentation by the Christian evangelist of an indefectible bliss. This is a point of similarity between the Buddhist and the Christian Gospel. A point of contrast follows. In the presentation of the Buddhist hope the emphasis is on deliverance from pain rather than from sin. Happiness rather than holiness is the goal. This present world is the bitter sea. The Western Region is the land of exceeding bliss. Here Christianity may justly claim to penetrate more deeply to the roots of things. Its emphasis is on salvation as from sin, and sin not merely as disturbance of human nature, but as rupture of harmony with God. In Christianity it is the centrality of the idea of God that determines everything. In Buddhism the thought is rather of the self as suffering. In Christianity Salvation is objective, the adjustment of moral relations with God. In Buddhism it is subjective, the elimination of what is painful from feeling.

Still, in spite of this contrast, Christianity, with all its emphasis on holiness, is not indifferent to

happiness; and on the other hand we must not overlook what saving salt of morality is present in the Buddhist idea of Salvation. The bitterness, for instance, from which escape is sought is no doubt traced back to guilt, not, as in Buddha's original thinking, to desire. Further, the Land of exceeding delight is the Pure Land. Salvation in that land is offered to "good men and believing women." Both adjectives have to be taken into account. If there is a gospel to be believed, there is also a rule of conduct to be obeyed. The nature of the purity and goodness implied must be learned from the general moral teaching of this Buddhist School, but at least purity and goodness are recognised as moral values.

We must allow also for whatever moral content is in the phrase "nien Fo." We may take it as meaning a devout recollection of Buddha. Of such recollection the popular saying is true, "A sincere heart is as good as incense." One cannot but recognise, however, in this tract a sliding over to another less worthy meaning of the phrase, so that it ceases to be a devout recollection of Buddha and becomes a mechanical repetition of his name. This sense of the phrase appears when we are told that for each hundred "nien" one circle is to be filled in, and that in this way merit is accumulated. Repetition of the name thus becomes a meritorious work. Coming to the tract with the antithesis of grace and works in our mind, we might easily set salvation by devout recollection of Buddha as salvation by grace, over against other methods of winning salvation as salvation by works. The anti-

thesis rather breaks down. On the one hand, for devout recollection of Buddha tends to be substituted meritorious repetition of his name. On the other hand, other methods of salvation, though characterised as painfully slow are not decisively ruled out as impossible. They remain open. Salvation, after all, is by merit, only this way of "nien Fo" is proposed as a way of gaining merit better suited than those other ways to human weakness. What is before us is not the mutually exclusive contrast of grace and works, but two methods of works, one painfully slow, the other accommodated to our weakness. In this competition we should expect the easier method to win, and in its winning to let down the more irksome moral demands, whereas in the sheer Pauline antithesis grace excludes law as a means of salvation and therefore, paradoxical as it may seem, is able to establish it as a rule of life.

How entirely "nien Fo" ceases to be a method of ethical development and swings over to being a meritorious work is seen from the fact that the merit of it is transferable to others. The practice of the method produces a stock of spiritual wealth which can be laid out for the advantage of anyone in whom its possessor is interested and can purchase advantages for him either in this world or—be it noted—in the world to come. For Northern Buddhism has developed a doctrine not only of Heaven or the Western Region but also of a place of punishment which may serve either as Hell or as Purgatory. Crude representations of the literally fiendish punishments inflicted in this after world on various classes of criminals are not uncommon, and the terror of

them is a frequent feature in popular tracts. There is no need to dwell on their blood-curdling details. It is enough to note that the doctrine is there. Now it is possible according to Buddhism—and in this it has drawn Taoism into the same condemnation—to alleviate the sufferings of souls in this after-world or even to purchase their escape from it, by special ritual performances which from the very name of them are reckoned to be meritorious, and the merit of which goes to their account. Merit acquired by "nien Fo" can be allocated in the same way. Of course, it must not be thought that merit is sought only by the practice of ritual acts. Deeds of benevolence and actions for the common good—giving of alms, provision of refreshment for wayfarers, repairing of roads—these and such like practices are meritorious. We need not doubt that they often express also the charity that is native to the human heart, though because of the theological climate they may be too easily and deeply infected with the taint of self-righteousness.

Naturally, also, once Salvation is thought of as a thing that can be purchased by merit, there is grave danger of the ordinary principles of the marketplace coming into operation, and cheap methods of acquiring merit being sought for. To what absurd lengths the idea of cheaply acquired merit can be carried is illustrated by a tract which shows Buddhist influence. To release life is a meritorious act. One of the most popular ways of doing this is to buy a live fish or turtle and set it free in its native element. A young man, so this tract tells us, who was in danger of untimely death, was divinely

warned that he could win long life by the merit of releasing life. But alas ! it was required of him that he release a hundred myriad of lives. The task seemed impossible until a second divine intimation came to him that it could be accomplished by the purchase, and replacing in the appropriate hatching-ground, of fish-roe with its myriads of eggs. Myriads of fish would owe their lives to him, and his would be the merit.

Let us frankly admit that in such ideas we have a popular degradation of Buddhist teaching. Equally frankly let us admit that Christianity has suffered from similar degradations. We should be sorry to have Christianity judged by the idea of it derived from an ignorant Roman Catholic as he repeats his Paternoster or Ave Maria, or by such a statement of his belief as to faith and the transference of Christ's merit as might be made by an ill-instructed Protestant. The idea of merit, at least if we mean by it anything more than the morally praiseworthy, and specially if it becomes quantitative, is ever a dangerous one in religion and never more dangerous than in the department of Soteriology. One might fear that such cheap methods of acquiring merit as what may fairly be called the fish-roe dodge would undermine all earnestness whatsoever. The evidence happily does not support this fear. At least there are welcome signs that many in one way or another take this matter of salvation very seriously. There are, for instance, those who practise Vegetarianism in order to acquire merit. We read of a present-day Buddhist campaign in which " the emphasis has not been on the degenerate aspects

of Buddhism so familiar in China. It has rather been an effort to persuade both men and women to give up the search for wealth and comfort and the hope of children and seek to have all the desires of the world annihilated." There have been others "who in extreme asceticism gradually and deliberately starved themselves to death in order to become immortals. The flesh being purified, the soul was believed to attain immortality and the emaciated body, preserved from decay, becomes a holy relic" (*W.M.M. Report*, 1925). I have heard a person show his ignorance of things Chinese by ridiculing the statement that a Vegetarian usually makes a good Christian. But so it is. Anyone, however misguided we may think him to be, who is sufficiently alive to spiritual issues to be a strict Vegetarian, is likely to carry the same spiritual earnestness into the Christian faith, if he is converted to it. But conversion is not easy when it means resigning, as worthless, merit painfully acquired by ascetic practices carried on over many years. Such Vegetarians are sometimes urged by their Christian friends, in what seems rather a hard way, to evince their new faith by breaking their vegetarian vow. The urgency is probably salutary. The breaking of the vow means a definite committal to the new faith, and brings with it a fresh liberation of spirit which is now unified on the new basis.

From such outward things as meritorious deeds and from the merely formal repetition of the name of Buddha by which we were led to speak of them, let us return to that meaning of "nien Fo" in which it may have a moral and even a religious value. One

gladly allows at least a moral efficacy to the recollection of a noble character. Suffused with gratitude and hope such recollection is vastly more potent for good than any effort of self-subjection to a nakedly acknowledged legal requirement. This efficacy will, of course, be in proportion to the knowledge of the devotee and to the moral impressiveness of the person to whom he is devoted. Now it must be admitted, I am afraid, that knowledge of A-mi-to, or of any Buddha, is often almost entirely lacking on the part of many who "nien Fo." The devotee can give no reason other than an authority for his practice. It must equally be admitted, I think, that it is from this same level that many Christians begin. On the authority of the Christian preacher they "nien" Jesus just as they were accustomed to "nien Fo." The mental attitude is as pathetically ignorant in the one case as in the other. It is only under such instruction as the Christian Church habitually provides that nien Jesus becomes the intelligent direction of the soul towards a definitely though imperfectly conceived Person. Similar instruction as to A-mi-to is or might be provided by Buddhist organisations. But what moral content would such instruction bring to bear on the mind of the devotee? The one moral quality that A-mi-to exemplifies is Compassion, concentrated in this one great act of self-sacrifice in that he declined Nirvana for himself until all other souls should be won thither. The conception of such an act is a noble one and has its great and legitimate appeal. It is possible so to present this act as to claim for A-mi-to, in his refusal to enter Nirvana, a moral

superiority over Jesus, who, according to the Christian confession, has ascended to Heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God. The claim is ill-founded, and forgets the difference between the Nirvana which A-mi-to declined, and the Heaven into which Jesus entered. A-mi-to in Nirvana would, for all active connection with this world, be as good as gone out of existence. Had he entered Nirvana no prayer of man could have reached him, no help from him could have reached men. But Jesus in Heaven is still, according to Christian faith, the living Saviour and Friend suffering with and helping His people. The Christian Heaven is not Nirvana, but the sphere of the unimpeded service of love. Jesus, if one may put it so, is the right-hand man of God, *the Father*, Almighty. Over against Buddha's refusal to enter Nirvana, Dr Johnston Ross puts Christ's decision on the Mount of Transfiguration. "The heavenly glory already all but enveloped Him, the heavenly communion drew His stainless soul; but down below, the earth, its sin and its sorrow summoned Him also. Which way should He take? The open way to Heaven, which was His by right, or the dolorous way to the Cross? He closed the open gate of Heaven. This is the great renunciation of the Christ." Whether we accept this interpretation of the Transfiguration or not, it is evident that the moral parallel to A-mi-to's refusal of Nirvana is Jesus' actual acceptance of the brutal fact of the Cross. Indeed, it might almost seem from the New Testament that, just as that for which A-mi-to stands is expressed in his one great refusal of Nirvana, so that

for which Jesus stands is expressed in His one great acceptance of the Cross. But the latter has a much fuller content than the former; and, while of the imaginary A-mi-to we know nothing save this one quality of Compassion, of the real Jesus we have the record of a perfect life; and devout recollection will find in the manifold grace of that historic record a richer source of moral stimulus than in the solitary virtue of the fabled renunciation.

The moral efficacy of such recollection is powerfully reinforced if it gathers into itself a religious element also, and it will do this in so far as the Person contemplated has for the devotee the value of God. In the case of Jesus, theologise about it as we will, there is this religious element. He is both Saviour and Lord. This is the distinctive mark of Christianity. Nor would it be true to deny that A-mi-to is also the object of religious regard. The faith and hope of the worshipper are in some sense set on him. It is not clear, however, in what sense this is so. The exact rôle he plays in the accomplishment of Salvation is vague. "Anyone," so we are told, "no matter what his life may have been, may enter the Western Paradise through faith in A-mi-to Hut," or "by repeating the name of A-mi-to Hut." But whether the faith shown by such repetition of the name is itself the meritorious condition of Salvation, or entitles to a share in the saving merit which is A-mi-to's because of his act of self-renunciation, or is a cry to which the saving might of A-mi-to responds—all this is obscure. Neither in moral nor in religious content is the recollection of A-mi-to comparable to the recollection of Jesus.

As to the suggestion that repetition of the name of A-mi-to is more or less of a cry to him for help, it must be admitted that the practice of "nien Fo" is seldom or never accompanied by anything corresponding to prayer for moral reinforcement. Beal indeed quotes from the ritual of the worship of Kwan-yin the words, "May the all-powerful Kwan-yin come hither as we recite the sentences, and remove from us the three obstacles" (impure thought, impure word, impure deed). One is glad to meet even this hint of the idea of succouring grace; but, so far as my knowledge goes, this is not a vein that Buddhism works. So far as ethical as distinguished from eschatological salvation is concerned, it speaks rather of salvation by self than of salvation by Another. Its emphasis is not so much on prayer as on meditation, a meditation that can no doubt be genuinely devout.

The meditative life, the practice of withdrawal from the beleaguered circumference of life to its quiet centre, has a value in itself, irrespective, one might say, of the object of meditation. It produces a certain poise and dignity and self-possession. The practice of meditation is not foreign to Christianity, but it would seem from Buddhist criticism that Christians fail to make sufficient room for it in their lives. This is a criticism to be honestly faced. It may be that we fail to keep the balance between inner and outer. But with the question of the practice of meditation there must go also the question of its content. What it may be in some cases we have seen; but it is perhaps with a shock that we realise that the object of Buddhist medita-

tion, we may say the characteristic object, is neither A-mi-to nor Kwan-yin, but just "nothing at all." We disclaim any intentional unfairness, but it is not unfair to resist any tendency on the part of Buddhism to present itself in two inconsistent forms, which may be looked at alternately and may so each make its separate appeal, now as a religion with a doctrine of salvation by faith, and now as a philosophy with a doctrine of salvation by disillusionment. One might be prepared to admit an exoteric and an esoteric teaching; but the appeal of the exoteric can only be allowed if it is compatible with the esoteric presuppositions. Now, what the fundamental presupposition of all Buddhism is, of the Mahayana as of the Hinayana, is beyond all doubt. It is the denial of all phenomenal reality. In the last resort there is no individuation, no differentiation. The world of men and things is all illusion; I and my thinking are alike illusion. The Western Paradise, the Divine Merit, the sinner's sin, the sinner himself and his misery, the Buddha and his compassion—if the question is pressed, no one of these things is real. All is illusion. All that popular representation of salvation as a personal, permanent, pleasurable, pure existence boils down to this. Since salvation is escape from illusion, salvation is a blank mind over against a blank world, or rather, there is no mind and no world, only blankness. Now symbolism finds a place in all religion, and a great Christian preacher has spoken of the function of illusion in the religious life. But symbols must symbolise something, and illusion is only justified when it is the veil of reality. While

in the Christian idea of final salvation in the world of the blessed there is much that we know to be symbolic and much no doubt that we shall find to have been illusion, what is behind will not be a reversal but a fulfilment of our present most real experience, a fellowship with God in His family of which Jesus Christ is the first-born. "Now are we sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall be manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." In its teaching of the future salvation, both as to its content and its certification by our present experience, Christianity need not fear comparison with Buddhism. But let us turn away from visions of the future and look at the present experience. Under the heading, "What Buddhism has to give," Professor Hodous tells of an important official of the Chinese Government who declared: "I could not get through my day's work if I did not spend an hour every day in meditation, just as Buddha did when he became enlightened." He was asked what he did when he meditated or prayed. "Nothing at all." "Well, about what do you think?" "Of nothing at all. I stop thinking when I engage in religious meditation. Life makes me think too much. I should lose my sanity if I did not stop thinking and enter into the 'void' whence we all came and into which we are all going to drop back." "What happens when you meditate or pray?" "Nothing happens, except that I experience a peace which the passing world cannot give and cannot altogether take away. The secret of religion is simply to realise that every-

thing is passing away. When you accept that fact then you become really free. Vanity of vanities, everything is vanity! Why worry? To pray means simply to quit worrying, to quit thinking, to enter into the indescribably passionless peace of Nirvana." As against this genuine Buddhist experience may we not put with confidence the Christian experience? "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

But let us follow Professor Hodous further in his account of this ardent Buddhist. When asked what he thought was the difference between a Buddhist and a Christian, he answered promptly, "Yes, there is my wife. She is a very good woman. All the neighbours come to her when there is anyone in trouble. So I say to her, 'Wife, I should think you would make a first-class Christian.' But I think she lets herself be worried by altogether too many troubles. She is all the time thinking and fussing and planning. To be sure it is mostly about other people. But then she does have the children and the house and the relatives and friends and neighbours to look after. Perhaps she really cannot be a Buddhist. Perhaps it is all a matter of temperament. Oh, but I tell you it is great to be a Buddhist because it gives you such a wonderful peace." From all this it might seem that to be a Buddhist is to belong to a spiritual aristocracy which needs a thinking, fussing and

planning non-Buddhist class for its support. At any rate here we have two spiritual values set one over against the other, inner peace and outward beneficence. Can they be united? Hardly, one would think, on the Buddhist ground that all is vanity. Whatever peace that conviction may bring, it is no logical basis for beneficence. If not on the Buddhist ground that all is vanity, then can inward peace and outward beneficence be united on the Christian ground that God is love? We answer this question by another, Have they not been so united in Jesus Christ?

CHAPTER VIII

The Presentation of the Gospel

In the preceding chapters I have endeavoured to bring before you characteristic specimens of the spiritual outlook of the Chinese. Our survey, of course, is very far from being complete either intensively or extensively. Of those subjects that have been touched on we have given sketches rather than finished plans drawn to scale, and some very relevant subjects have not been touched on at all. One would have liked to have said something, for instance, of the ancient heretics and heresies combated by Mencius, especially of Micius, and his doctrine of Universal Love, for which the claim has been made that it anticipates what is most characteristic of Christian morality. The various unorthodox theories of human nature are not uninteresting and show how Chinese thought has attempted to explain the fact of human failure. Modern Confucian thought, Neo-Buddhism and modern syncretistic movements—amalgams of five or six religions—Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, Judaism—are also not undeserving of study. And, as is evident from the very suggestion of such an amalgam, Christianity may be reckoned part of the religious heritage of the China of to-day, and an

outline of its contact with China and a description of its present state could not have been regarded as outside our title. Even more than such subjects as these, it might have been expected that the present anti-Christian movement in China would have had a chapter to itself. This subject I have deliberately omitted for several reasons; partly because its output is very great in bulk and I have seen only samples of it; partly because what of that output I have sampled did not seem to show anything distinctively Chinese—Bertrand Russell in Chinese is, after all, just Bertrand Russell—partly also because the anti-Christian movement is not purely religious or philosophic, but is mixed up with international politics, and Christianity is attacked not only as false but as foreign.

The anti-Christian movement is indeed deserving of most serious attention elsewhere, so that, for instance, those who are sent to propagate Christianity in China may be intellectually as well as spiritually fitted for their work. Even its semi-political utterances might provide a text from which to urge the necessity of applying Christianity seriously at home if it is to be successfully preached abroad. The background of our home civilisation, the record of our foreign policy, are not in all respects such adjuncts to our missionary enterprise as we might desire. Neither is so black as some Chinese critics have painted it, but in either it is only too easy to find blots. We may wonder sometimes whether those who oppose Christianity as the ally or cat's paw of Imperialism and Capitalism know what these words mean, but at least their

use reminds us that as the world is one so also life is one, and must in its every department be in active and co-operative service for Christ.

But though I have not dealt with this anti-Christian movement or with the "New Tide" of which it is a part, what we have been doing is not out of all relation to it. Part of its avowed aim is to revive and preserve Chinese culture. This is a worthy aim if it is wisely pursued, with discrimination of what is valid from what is effete, and even such a partial survey as has here been attempted may be some help towards discrimination in the religious sphere. At any rate it may suggest to iconoclastic Christians, if there are such, that Chinese thinking is not to be rejected wholesale, and to non-Christian Chinese that Christianity is not blindly iconoclastic. It is curious, as one of my colleagues has remarked, that Chinese who are opposing Christianity as a "cultural invasion" of their country should at the same time be accepting from Russia a culture which is much more subversive than Christianity is of all that China has held dear both in religion and morals.

All through our survey our standard of reference has been the Christian faith, and as occasion offered I have said something of the relation of Christianity to certain Chinese forms of thought. In this final chapter I shall try to say something more explicitly of the Presentation of the Christian Faith, the way in which it may be introduced into the climate of the Chinese mind and of its fortunes there.

To begin with, does not our survey confirm us in the determination, which probably most of us had already reached, to dismiss from our minds the

suggestion that there is an impassable gulf between us and the Chinese, or indeed—if we may extend the reference—between occidental and oriental, or any two groups of men, however they are labelled? We can in some degree follow and appreciate Chinese thinkers. We can understand them even where we disagree, and often where we agree we find our higher selves reinforced by their fellowship, which, as one Christian scholar has said of his study of Confucius, may reveal "the nobility of human life," and be "edifying to the character." We have noted also parallels, not to be explained by mutual dependence, between systems in China and systems in India and in the West. Such similarity of output, and such mutual intelligibility even when the output is dissimilar, is proof that the thinking mind in all men is fundamentally one, and is everywhere in contact with a world which, however varied in outward appearance, embodies one and the same evocative Reason. This, of course, is no more than to say that Truth is catholic, and there follow two corollaries. First, here missionary work finds its ultimate warrant. No one has a right, *a priori*, to condemn missionary work but the rational sceptic—if the oxymoron be allowed—who denies that truth can be known, or the moral sceptic who denies that truth is worth knowing. The second corollary is this; no one who is convinced of the truth of his message need hesitate to proclaim it; or, to put it a little more accurately, if we *see* a thing to be true we may confidently expect that other men too will be able to see it—under favourable conditions.

The qualifying clause is not unimportant. That all men share in a common mind does not mean that the communication of truth is an easy matter which makes no demand either on him who presents the truth or on him to whom it is presented. Our business is chiefly with the presentation of the message, but it will do us no harm to consider for a moment the position of him to whom we present it. From my own experience I can imagine a Chinese of twenty years ago commenting on the situation: "Here is a foreigner, unattractive in appearance, dressed in outlandish and rather indecent clothes, or if he wears our dress wearing it awkwardly. He has evidently little knowledge of politeness. He speaks Chinese badly and with a foreign accent. He invites us to believe things that are quite incredible or that at least lack all proof. He asks us to give up things that have come down to us from of old and have the authority of our ancient teachers, and to put in the place of our Sages a foreigner with an outlandish name." Such might have been, and in a large measure may still be, the comments of a Chinese on a foreign evangelist. Such are some of the disadvantages under which our message comes to the Chinese, even apart from those political handicaps, fair and unfair, at which we have already hinted. What mental qualities then must we look for in any Chinese if he is to be a likely subject of conversion? Surely such as these: open-mindedness, readiness to listen, patience to consider, humility to learn. That is the demand made on the possible convert, and how hard this mental attitude is! Let us

remember then that what we expect, we must exemplify. This is part of the demand that the work of presentation makes on us. We go to China to present Christianity to the Chinese, and once arrived there we have Confucianism or other Chinese teachings presented to us, not as systems in books to be studied, but as beliefs and prepossessions of persons to be persuaded. What is our mental attitude to them? Are we prepared to be patient to hear, sympathetic to understand, glad to recognise golden veins or grains of truth, humble enough to be taught? You will say, perhaps, that this last virtue, at any rate, will not be demanded of a Christian missionary in a non-Christian land, the preacher of the absolute and final religion to those who have at best no more than fragmentary approximations to it. But we must not hastily identify our conception of Christianity with Christianity itself. I may know Jesus as the Truth, but not all my thinking about God and man may be as truth is in Jesus, and a fragmentary approximation to the Truth in a non-Christian mind may show me something in it which I had failed to see. Moreover, not to welcome a truth from our hearer may block his acceptance of a truth from us. Even a Christian missionary, therefore, must be humble enough to be taught—I mean by a non-Christian. That one should be willing to learn from a fellow-Christian in whom the Spirit of God dwells goes without saying—in theory. This mental attitude it is not easy even to aim at—honestly—or to attain or to maintain. But it should be common to speaker and hearer. If we recognise its difficulty for us

who speak we shall have greater patience with those who hear. And if we admit that it is so difficult that conversion is impossible without a work of grace in the hearer, let us admit also that, though unlikely things do happen, conversion is made at least more likely by a similar work of grace in the preacher.

There is perhaps a tendency to assume that such a mental attitude as we have spoken of is a modern attainment, or at least a modern demand, and that missionaries of an older date had a quite different outlook. They, it is supposed, looked down on all non-Christian races as heathen, spoke of them as blind, did not expect to find any truths in their "superstitions," were very sure, with a certain smugness, of the truth of Christianity, and were full of pity, but of a rather patronising kind. It may have been so, more or less: or it may be that our thought of them is to some extent the projection on them of the temptations and tempers we find so strong in ourselves. I find, for instance, the Rev. William Milne, "Protestant missionary at Malacca," in 1815, remarking that "the Gospel was not intended to annihilate the good principles which are found existing among Pagan nations," and that "the judicious Christian, aware that all truth proceeds from One Eternal source, will venerate it, according to its importance, wherever it is found." However, I am not well enough read in the earlier records of our modern missions to say which view is correct. If our missionary forefathers were such as they are supposed to have been, we may well be thankful that we have learned to

aim at least at a different spirit. But in our swing away from the old attitude we may lose as well as gain if we are not careful. We may lose the conviction, in which they were so strong, of the truth of Christianity. We may lose their earnest desire to save souls. Christianity is not likely to be with us so elaborately articulated a system of doctrine as it was with them; but without the conviction of its truth really very little can be done, and happily the more gracious attitude which is claimed as modern is not inconsistent with such conviction. To speak the truth in love does not mean to speak it with hesitation, saying to the adherent of another creed, "I think this is true, but after all I may be mistaken, and you may be right." What it does mean is, to begin with, this; that, seeing as truth the thing that has been revealed to me and grips me, I speak it with conviction. That is to speak the truth. And to speak it in love is to speak it with that absence of pride that sets one free to recognise without grudging whatever truth is in the other man's creed: to be patient with him in his struggles towards the light or even his prejudiced turning away from it, to be anxious only to aid his struggles and remove his prejudices so that he too may come to possess that truth which is mine though not of me. And, again, though "saving souls" has no longer for us the eschatological content that it had for our fathers, we must not lose their earnestness. There is a curious prejudice in some quarters against the word "pity," as if it were akin to contempt. There is an equally curious prejudice against urgency in preaching, as

if it were an invasion of the rights of personality. This is surely an inhumanly doctrinaire position. Our human relationships are not barely rational, but affectional as well. Where there is pity there will be urgency, and I cannot think that pity rightly understood should be absent from the disciples of Him who when He saw the multitudes had compassion on them. True pity is not incompatible with moral admiration. Our Lord loved the young man whom He called and for whom He grieved when he turned away. Nor is pity patronising. We may feel it for one who is our superior, if only we have the human heart of the little maid who said, "Would God *my master* were with the prophet that is in Israel." Let us, then, ask ourselves if it is not a pity that anyone should be unacquainted with Jesus as we know Him? And again, what urgency is out of place in those who profess to be proclaiming "the unsearchable riches of Christ?" Let us allow its legitimate emotional effect to the plain fact that any man, however noble, would be infinitely the better for knowing Christ, and that we who may be the least of all saints can be the conveyers of such knowledge.

We pass from these perhaps too general considerations. In seeking to lead men to the knowledge of God in Christ, it is a commonplace that we must begin with them where they are. Some point of contact must be found between their present thinking and the new truth that we bring to them. It is not unimportant here to note two things: (1) the contact must be with some truth that they already hold, not with some error. As we shall see,

there may be a temptation to make this wrong sort of contact. (2) To find the point of contact concerns the intelligibility of our message: it removes difficulties and prejudices, but cannot ensure faith, which is not a mere matter of intellect, the inevitable conclusion of an argument, but a movement of the whole personality, the genesis of which "*abit in mysterium*." "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knoweth not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

A priori, there must be a possible point of contact between Christianity and every human mind, otherwise Christianity is not fitted to be the universal religion. *A posteriori*, it is not difficult to indicate points of contact with the Chinese mind. Some, perhaps of a rather academic kind, have already been hinted at in the preceding lectures. You may recall the moral monarchianism of the ancient Shang-ti, the desire for reconciliation with the world that underlies Taoism, the theistic implications of Chu Hsi's immanent reason, Wang's freedom through truth, Buddhist longings for salvation. There are others of a more popular nature.

Here, for instance, is a village all astir. The village gods, seated in open sedan-chairs, are being carried shoulder-high round the fields accompanied by the squealing of pipes and the occasional clash of cymbals. The elders and other villagers follow in a straggling procession. The whole thing is tawdry, unkempt, devoid of dignity. But it is the village prayer, or thanksgiving, for a good harvest,

better surely than our gazing over rich arable land with never a thought in our minds other than the market value of the crop or the success of a new system of manuring. How we contrive to strip our life of its spiritual aspects! Chinese idols have not to us, or perhaps to anyone, the poetic glamour that clings to Proteus rising from the sea, or to old Triton blowing his wreathed horn, but is it not better that men should walk in an idol procession rather than be dead to any spiritual reference? We may then approach them saying, We are glad that you are giving thanks. You thank, do you not, the Ancient Worthies, or, it may be, Heaven and Earth? But what think you, would it not be better to thank Shang-ti who made heaven and earth, who cared for the ancient worthies when they were men living between heaven and earth even as we are, and who continues to give us rains and fruitful seasons even though we thank Him not?

Or again, as we sit in a temple courtyard we say, You have your temples and you worship spiritual beings. You may have heard that we repudiate such worship. That is not true of us. Indeed, you will excuse us for saying that it is true rather of you than of us. You worship men of ancient times, for, as the proverb says, "The spirits of to-day are the men of ancient times." But we worship a Spirit, Shang-ti, who is one and supreme even as the sun is solitary in the sky. Your ancestors knew of Him and He is mentioned in your Classics. If He is called Heaven it is not because He is just the blue sky above us with its clouds and sun and moon and

stars, but partly because our forefathers thought that He lived there, and partly because He may be compared to heaven, so high above us, everlasting, overarching the whole earth, common to all men. But He is not really like the sky nor anything else. For indeed we cannot see a Spirit. Your Classics tell us that He is righteous and has given us our knowledge of right and wrong that we may know what His will is. Is not obedience to His will our common task about which we may talk together? Let us not speak of sages or of other men, but of ourselves. How inexorable are the demands of righteousness over deed and word and thought! When we examine ourselves, how pitifully we have failed! We need help, and just as you pray for health and good fortune, so much more should we pray for help to do what is right. You do not ask your idols for such help, but we may ask Shang-ti. He is our Heavenly Father, and which of you who is a father would not rather have his son filial and a lover of good than have him merely rich?

I say nothing here of the conciliatory effect of accurate knowledge of the language, acquaintance with local customs, apt use of proverbs, the ordinary courtesies of social intercourse. I have only tried to show how, as along more scholarly lines so also in these simpler ways, there are exposed in Chinese thought and practice moral and religious nerves, "terminals" which Christian truth can touch, and through which it can find access to the very seat of the inner life.

To have found such contacts puts preacher and hearer on the same level. But now from this

common ground advance must be made, and it is best made by preacher and hearer continuing their touch with one another as companions on a spiritual pilgrimage towards a fuller apprehension of the Truth.

In this pilgrimage the preacher, if he only bears in mind the words, "Who made thee to differ?" will not pridefully assert the difference between himself and his companion. But neither may he with disingenuous humility deny it. We missionaries go to teach a new truth: otherwise, why go? We bring, then, a new truth, which finds its point of contact with a truth already held. Now, as is already evident enough, that truth may have found expression in a form that is erroneous. Still, in so far as truth is there, the Christian assumption, not yet disproved by experience, is that it can come to its own only in and through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am come not to destroy but to fulfil." This is a saying which in some quarters is regarded as regulative of the relation of Christianity to all other faiths. These words, however, were spoken in reference to the Old Testament revelation, and, as some have argued, it may be a perversion of them to apply them in a wider context. If a comparative view of religions shows, as I think it does, a more direct line of evolution towards Christianity from the religion of Israel than from any other religion, that is a fact of which some account must be taken. At least it is not self-evidently safe from a certain relation between Jesus and one line of religious development to conclude an exactly similar relation to any and every other existent religion. It is

attractive, no doubt, to speak of Jesus as the crown, not of the Hebrew religion only, but of every religion; but a generalisation may be so widened that, however ingenious, it becomes thin and misleading. In the ethical sphere it may be said, for instance, that every human choice is made under the idea of the Good, and that, as the Good is in Jesus, He, therefore, is the end of every human activity. Now one may perhaps allege Scripture for saying that the fullness of life that is found, though only fallaciously, in intoxication can be better found elsewhere, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess but be filled with the Spirit." But to pursue this line and to attribute to the Piccadilly prostitute and her paramour even an implicit search for Jesus is a paradox that shocks more than its very meagre truth justifies. What we may confidently say is that human nature as a whole, in any man and in any given circumstances, will find its fullest possible harmonious satisfaction in Jesus. He is, therefore, the Crown of Humanity, but not of its lusts; and—to narrow our view down again to religion—all the religious instincts of humanity will find their truth in Jesus, but many of the forms in which these instincts have expressed themselves will be destroyed by Him. They may be blind alleys—or, even worse, perversions—into which the religious instincts have wandered and from which they must first retreat if they are to advance along the true Way to the Father.

Christianity, therefore, is both evolutionary and revolutionary. It is evolutionary because it leads on the religious sense of men along its proper line

of development. It is revolutionary because it will destroy the erroneous forms in which that religious sense has already expressed itself. The Christian preacher will, of course, be wise to emphasise the evolutionary aspect. He will seek to fulfil the religious instinct of his hearer: the destruction of its erroneous expression he will leave as far as possible to the convert himself. It will be destroyed by being deserted. But if the preacher is to be evolutionary he must not only find the point of contact, the truth already acknowledged in common; it is equally necessary that he bring forward his new truth. If there is nothing in common, there is no access. If there is nothing different, there is no advance. This is obvious. Yet I suppose no one has done much preaching to a non-Christian audience of one or of many without feeling the temptation to dwell on the common ground. To have bridged the gulf between oneself and one's hearer of a different faith is so delightful that one is loath to risk perturbing the pleasure by a ruffle of dissent. Yet there is nothing more futile than to settle down in an agreement which conceals essential differences. This is the futility that, from the Christian point of view, attaches to the syncretistic movements in China to-day. They are interesting as evidence of a living and restless religious interest. But they must either become platitudinous or disrupt. "Those whose principles differ cannot walk together." Fusions of five or six religions are merely irritating to all who value clear thinking. To yield to this lazy or cowardly enjoyment of a sometimes flattering assent is to be

guilty of deforming our message by suppression of some aspect of it. We are so guilty if, for instance, we are content with the Treaty description of Christianity as a religion which teaches men the practice of virtue, and expatiate solely on its moral excellence. We are again guilty perhaps when we limit ourselves to expounding the monotheistic idea, because we can there base ourselves on the reason common to ourselves and our hearers, and shrink from proclaiming the Christian facts, where we stand perforce on experience particular to individuals, in the immediate case, ourselves. This is one reason for our preference of philosophising to preaching. Again we incur something of the same guilt when we merely enlarge on the region of our agreement, amusing ourselves and our hearers, not always without insincerity, by accepting superficial resemblances, such as may be made out between Taoist and Christian morality, or Buddhist and Christian religious ideas. In view of the harmonistic utterances of some representatives of Christianity, it is refreshing to find on the Buddhist side a frank recognition of incompatibility. If on the Christian side someone speaks of Chen Ju, the Absolute Reality, as having a " close analogy to the Christian conception of God," we find on the Buddhist side Tai Hsu, an outstanding representative of Neo-Buddhism, declaring, after a discussion of the meaning of Chen Ju and Ju Lai, that the ideas of God given in Christianity are not found in these terms, and that when Western thinkers " ascribe reality to an outside Heavenly God . . . it is but an illusion." Such a frank acknowledgment of difference is

entirely welcome. Let us resolve then to introduce the new element, and that means obviously to introduce it in its difference from the old. That is the task. How best to do it is the problem, and we are at once met with the suggestion of "accommodation." That accommodation is legitimate we know from the very highest authority. "He spake the word unto them as they were able to hear it." The limits within which it is legitimate are not so easily determined.

Some illegitimate forms of accommodation are recognisable enough. Take one of a low grade. Popular Buddhism has sought to work on the minds of men by the hope of heaven and fear of hell, both heaven and hell being depicted by pen and pencil in a very crude manner. Now there is sometimes in men an appearance of dull and brutish indifference to all spiritual interests which makes one almost despairingly say, "All men have not faith," and I believe that many missionaries, facing this indifference, will confess to their having felt the temptation to such a presentation of their message as alone seemed likely to touch men so besotted with this world. There is no need for the Christian evangelist to shirk the fact that in a moral world good and evil have their inevitable recoil on the doers of them. There are, however, ways of putting this truth which excite hope of heaven and horror of hell, without any increase of love of good or hate of evil. But the mere excitation of such hope and horror is not of any religious value. Those who, despairing of any other approach, follow this line of appeal lack faith in human nature. They

find, indeed, a point of contact. By playing on it they may induce conformity to a new ritual of worship and a slightly higher ethical code. So much of new they may succeed in grafting on to the old. But they have not really brought forward what is distinctively new in Christianity, and they, therefore, effect no inward change, no conversion, no real turning to God. The results do not justify the method. Moreover, the use of it discredits Christianity; whatever may be the case now, anti-Christian charges made to-day seem to show that fear has at some time been too prominent in Christian preaching. Resentment is expressed against such terrorism. One finds the same charge of terrorism brought against Buddhism in the popular editions of the "Sacred Edict." We may rightly speak of the mild and gentle spirit of Buddha; but as in Christianity so in Buddhism the spirit of the Founder has been sadly belied by the ferocious imaginings of his professed disciples; and we cannot but regret that there have been Christian missionaries who in their theology would not use a non-Christian term for God, but who in their eschatology took over Buddhist terms without scruple—ignoring, probably in accordance with the harder thinking then current, their unsuitableness. The associations of the Buddhist terms for the place of bliss, "the Western Heaven," "the Heavenly Hall," "the World of Joy," may not be glaringly objectionable, though I remember Dr Campbell Gibson trying, without much success, to get rid even of such associations by the introduction to Christian use of the term Heavenly City. But the associa-

tions of the Buddhist term for the place of punishment are deplorable. Its use by a Christian preacher is as horribly incongruous as curses from the lips of an innocent child, and must suggest to his hearers ideas which, it may be hoped, he does not hold. Such an appeal to pre-existing eschatological ideas is a case of bad accommodation: a case of deformation of the Christian message, due to impatience, bred of lack of faith, and aggravated by the use of terms that distort. The anti-Christian protests I have alluded to indicate that such short and easy methods of a spiritual press-gang have their disadvantages too, and that faith and love might find a better way to the hearts of men.

Christianity, as I have said, has suffered in this eschatological region by its use of Buddhist terms, and it may be convenient here to say a little more generally on this matter. Buddhism has been credited with doing much to keep alive the religious sense among the Chinese. Its widespread vogue seems to indicate that it met religious needs not provided for in the religions native to China. It has certainly made its mark on the Chinese language. Its phraseology is accepted now, though it was its own creation, and was criticised in the beginning for its uncouthness. To such criticism it was answered that "The words of Buddha are holy words, not merely elegant or tasteful, and that his law is not designed to attract by its pleasing character but by its deep and spiritual meaning" (Beal, *Texts from the Buddhist Canon*). It might have been better for Christianity to have been equally courageous and original. But it was content to follow

Buddhism in this matter of terms. For it is true to say that the religious terms used by the Christian preacher have nearly all got Buddhist associations. There is therefore some force, though it may be exaggerated, in the contention that Christianity "cannot be put fairly and clearly before the Chinese until Buddhism is studied by every missionary, and its terminology understood as it ought to be by those who constantly use the same terms in a sense more or less diverse and sometimes directly opposite." The danger of misunderstanding is to a certain degree extenuated by the growth of the Christian community and a better and more generally diffused understanding of what is distinctive in Christianity, or even that there is something distinctive in it. In this way it may come about that identity of terms will not conceal difference of content. One hears with interest that present-day Buddhism in Japan is in its turn taking over religious phrases and words which Christianity has filled with new meaning, Buddhism thus receiving back its own with usury. This may come to be the case in China also. Meanwhile, however, there remains in the use of Buddhist terms a danger of the Christian message being deformed by its non-Christian vehicle.

Such deformation is, as we have seen, not a danger merely, but a fact—unsuspected sometimes—in the eschatological region. But the use of Buddhist terms is not confined to that region. The question, therefore, of their influence is not unimportant. As Hatch has written of the influence of Greek ideas in Christian thought, so, without implying that the

two cases are similar, we might suggest the influence of Buddhism on Chinese Christianity—or perhaps their reciprocal influence—as matter for an interesting study. Here we glance only at one aspect, but an important one, of a wide subject.

Buddhism has, as we have seen, its doctrine of Salvation, and in that connection a whole set of terms, guilt, punishment, redemption, merit, satisfaction. The idea of merit is, of course, closely linked up in Buddhist thought with that of Salvation. If used by the Christian preacher, it obviously lends itself easily to commercial illustrations of the saving work of Jesus Christ, in which salvation is quite frankly purchased from God by those who will for that purpose accept a donation from Christ's store of merit. And there is no doubt that such a way of putting it gives to Christ and His death a place in the scheme of Salvation which is intelligible to those brought up in the Buddhist milieu. A senior colleague of mine, enlarging in this way on the love of Jesus in dying for men, was gratified by the murmured appreciation of his audience, "Great indeed was his merit." So much then must be granted. It should be noted in passing that, of course, this intelligibility must not be taken, as it sometimes is, as a proof of the truth of this way of putting things. To make appreciation by the non-Christian mind the test of spiritual truth would be surely a strange position. Indeed, such appreciation might, with at least as much reason, suggest a very different conclusion. For it seems to me the fact that Christian missionaries found in China ready-made religious terms, formed by the natural

man, into which their conception of Christianity, fitted as a hand into a glove, may be not a confirmation of that conception so much as a just occasion for suspecting it. It is only on a very optimistic interpretation of history that we may say that what precedes is necessarily a positive preparation. But, it may be asked with surprise, must we not commend our message to man as we find him? Yes, but we must distinguish the non-Christian mind from the mind of the non-Christian man. Congruity with the former may be ground for suspicion. It is congruity with the latter that is a presumption or even proof of truth. We must build on what is fundamental in human nature.

Still, of course, intelligibility is a good. If by the use of Buddhist terms we can throw our Gospel into a form which is intelligible to those to whom we speak is not that clear gain? Or, if not clear gain, is not the gain at least so great as to justify our taking a certain risk of our message being deformed by its vehicle? The question is a fair one. No doubt it is legitimate to use metaphors which are confessedly inadequate in order to bring out this or that element in salvation; such metaphors as the cancelling of a debt or the redemption of a captive. Both these metaphors are used in Scripture and are useful, though neither is adequate to describe that total change in a man's relation to God which is salvation. But on the other hand there are illustrations so inapplicable as to be misleading. It is dangerous, for instance, to adduce, as has been done, the offerings made to placate malignant spirits as throwing any light on Christ's

offering of Himself to God. What then is the case as regards the use of Buddhist terms? If we believe that they are applicable, even though inadequate, to our subject-matter, we may, I suppose, use them. Even so, I wonder if we really do get our conception of Salvation across to the mind of the hearer, or whether it does not lose its most precious element in transit. For we are speaking from an experience of alienation from God and of reconciliation to Him. But our hearer probably has no such presuppositions. What sense of wrong he may have arises from his contradiction to a vaguely conceived moral order. For this he is liable to be punished by certain spiritual beings both here and hereafter: for this he is in danger of hell and is excluded from felicity. What he reaches after is not reconciliation with God but admission to Paradise; and the merit of Christ, of which he is told, is for him only a substitute for whatever merit he might have painfully accumulated as the price of entrance. Is more then accomplished by desire of Heaven than we admitted might be accomplished by fear of Hell, the practice of a new ritual, conformity to a new code? Can either bribes or threats effect a real conversion? Or is a Christ who is the Way to Heaven the religious equivalent of a Christ who is the Way to the Father?

In all this we have assumed that the Buddhist terms are applicable to the matter of our message, but if they are really inapplicable to the Christian salvation, what then? Is any appreciation of it based on them likely to be of lasting value? What if they are recognised by us as being inapplicable? Is it then honest

on our part to make use of them in order to win such appreciation, or is this an illegitimate accommodation? The question is a real one to those who work on a Mission-field where the non-Christians under Buddhist influence and, one may add, the Christians under the influence of missionaries of a previous generation, conceive of Salvation under these forms of thought, not as inadequate metaphors, but as corresponding to the ultimate truth of things. It is in that assumption that the danger lies. Let me take an illustration which, on my last visit to the Mission-field three years ago, I heard used in preaching to the non-Christians. Exactly what it was meant to illustrate, I have forgotten. A king's son has broken a law, the sanction of which is the loss of both eyes. Torn between a reluctance to relax the law before his people and a reluctance to inflict blindness on his son, the king decrees that his son shall lose one eye and he himself will give up one eye so that the law shall not be stinted of its quota of two eyes. The illustration is not Chinese. It is an importation from the West. Among us it must at some time have been acceptable. But if we now see it to be inadequate to God's relations to men, and therefore misleading, may we use it because it is intelligible to those to whom we speak and they are not aware of its inadequacy? Can we do so and preserve our intellectual integrity? Is not the present intelligibility to our hearers bought at too dear a rate if it is likely to embarrass their advance to the position at which we ourselves now stand? Is not the preacher's only honourable and safe course to state that which is

true to himself, and to attach it to that which he sees to be true in his hearers' position, basing himself on the human element that is common to them all?

In what has been said there is raised a wider and possibly more contentious issue, the issue between a legal and a personal presentation of religion. The issue is not peculiar to Chinese soil, but presents itself there very clearly. For we may note that this illustration which I have quoted as being intelligible to the Chinese, and the terms which in this soteriological field Christianity has borrowed from Buddhism, are all appropriate to a legal and impersonal relation between God and man. Guilt and merit, for instance, are transferable quantities. Such ideas, therefore, are catholic rather than evangelical. Attention has often been called to the striking similarities of the Buddhist and Roman Catholic cults. These are indeed striking. But Catholicism is a much wider thing than Roman Catholicism; and it is much more important to note that these Buddhist terms express what Sohm has called the Catholicism of the natural man. To that Catholicism he attributes the difference between the Christianity of the sub-Apostolic period and the Christianity of the New Testament. Now, Mr Campbell Moody, in his most interesting book *The Mind of the Early Converts*, points out the close resemblance between the Christianity of converts as he found it on the Mission-field, and this catholicised sub-Apostolic Christianity. His conclusions are very relevant to our subject because what he says of the racially Chinese Church

in Formosa is true of the Church at least in the adjacent parts of China proper. His contention is that neither in the ancient nor in the modern case is the cause of the phenomenon peculiar to its circumstances, but that the common cause in both cases is the Catholic bias of the natural man. I agree. For it is not correction but confirmation to suggest that in China this bias has worked partly through the adoption by Christianity of Buddhist terms, these terms being themselves a creation of that bias. In the influence of the natural mind, strengthened in this case by Buddhist presuppositions, we have the cause of that assimilative deformation of Christianity which Mr Moody deplores.

I confess, however, that I should be happier if I were sure that the catholicising of Christianity on the China Mission-field were due only to the catholic bias of the natural man and—as Mr Moody adds—of the immature Christian, abetted by the influence of Buddhist terminology. I cannot but be afraid that in some cases Christianity, as presented to the Chinese, had already been deformed by that bias. It is here, perhaps, that the parallel between the deformation of Christianity in sub-Apostolic times and its deformation on the Mission-field to-day breaks down, in so far at least as the preachers of Christianity in those primitive times may be assumed, somewhat precariously, indeed, to have started from the New Testament level.

I recall a popular Christian Tract, the title of which was, " The Ten Commandments of Jehovah Shang-ti." It set forth the Mosaic Ten words in large type, each followed by a small type exposition

applying it to Chinese conditions, infanticide, for instance. To this, in the hope that some conviction of sin would be awakened in the reader, there was appended a small-type statement of the substitutionary work of Christ and the regenerating work of the Spirit. One recognises the outlines of a familiar statement of evangelical truth with the legal preamble supposed to be necessary to secure its acceptance. What objection then is there to such a statement? Much every way. It was perhaps unfortunate that so foreign a flavour was given to the whole by the prominent use of the unintelligible name Jehovah. It was on a balance unfortunate that the title put the tract in the same class as Chinese Tracts, the World-Exhortations of Yu-huang Shang-ti and other such productions. Much more unfortunate was the legal aspect of the whole presentation. It is this aspect that calls for consideration. There are plausible arguments in its favour. It is, one might argue, the presentation that is "accommodated" to the spiritual status of the hearer. What this line of argument involves is worth while considering. It has been said, for instance, that "the light of the truth as it is in Jesus would have been incomprehensible to the primitive tribes who camped beneath Mount Sinai 1200 years before Christ." Such a statement seems innocuous in one's study. It may not be so innocuous on the Mission-field, where the question may be raised whether there are not primitive tribes to-day to whom it would be useless to preach the truth as it is in Jesus. We shall realise how serious the question is if we reflect that

to answer affirmatively might warrant the claim that Mohammedanism is better suited than Christianity to the Negro race at its present stage. As to this claim we would rather sympathise, I suppose, with Dr Aggrey's protest that his people have a right to the best in religion. But if we reject this Mohammedan claim can we consistently find any valid reason for the theory that a legal experience is a necessary preliminary to an appreciation of the Gospel? No doubt some will ask, Is not that the meaning of the long discipline of Israel from Sinai onward until in the fullness of the time Christ came? Did not Paul say that the law is a tutor to bring men to Christ? Did not our fathers speak of "law-work," and see nothing objectionable in sense, whatever there was ludicrous in language, when a Highland minister spoke of leaving a half-awakened soul a little longer "in the jaws of Moses"? Hence we have the preaching of the Ten Commandments of Jehovah Shang-ti in order to induce a sense of guilt and a willingness to accept acquittal on the basis of Christ's imputed merit. All this forgets that, according to the same Paul, the Gospel to Abraham preceded the law to Israel, and that, whatever the law may have been to the Jews, Paul thought that Gentiles would have had all the preliminary discipline they needed so that he could take the Gospel straight to them. For what is open to criticism is not the endeavour to awaken men to the moral realities of life, but the fact that this is done within a legal setting. So God is primarily set forth as Law-giver and Judge. There is condemnation and acquittal, and, since acquittal is of the actually

guilty, the acquittal is a legal form. At any rate God is presented in legal guise, and only after His action in law is over is He free to express Himself as Father. It is not the Father's grief but the judicial frown that confronts the sinner. The Gospel, so it is held, can only be stated in forensic terms. The lamentable extent to which this can go—let us hope but rarely—is seen in a missionary's statement that there is no Gospel in the parable of the Prodigal Son. There are thus two views of God, the judicial and the paternal. The latter may come to *overlie* the former, but as in a composite photograph, the stern lines of the judicial features blur the love of the Father's face. Of course, as I have said, there is nothing peculiarly Chinese in this; only it was this presentation of Christianity that was taken to China and found, as we have seen, allies there. It was not only congruous to the universal bias of the natural man, but also in Buddhist terms it found a ready-made medium for its expression. Hence at once a certain intelligibility was possible, and, at least in certain areas, the more theologically minded of the Chinese Christians would, I imagine, express their views of Salvation in accordance with these ideas, however the Gospel may have been presented to them. But at the same time it may be suspected that defects in the Christian experience of the converts—or in their expression of it, " their inability to understand the Gospel "—may be due to difficulties, not only in them, but implicit in this presentation of Christianity to them. Its intelligibility is fallacious and begets perplexities. Forgiveness is an eschato-

logical conception, acquittal at the Last Judgment. There is room, therefore, for hesitancy in claiming forgiveness now; the proleptic verdict may not turn out to coincide with the final one. Hence the timid, "I hope to be forgiven." The claim to more than this, to be now accepted by God, to be already in a never-to-be-broken peace with God, is perturbed by self-knowledge of sin or experience of calamity. For, God being Judge, calamity is penal and sin explains it. Nor can one ever be sure that one has fulfilled the conditions on which Christ's merit is or will be put to one's account. These hesitancies and perturbations are inherent in the position, construed legally. That a Judge should declare to be just one who is consciously a transgressor is a less simple and intelligible statement, less fundamentally human, than that a Father should love and forgive and help an unworthy child. Why not begin as we mean to end, with this Fatherly relation? Is not the parable of the Prodigal Son more revealing of human sin and of Divine Grace, more truly evangelical, more immediately intelligible and appealing, more of a piece with the Christian life of sonship, than the preaching which presents God in two rôles, first as Judge condemning and justifying the guilty criminal, and only then as Father welcoming the lost son?

I do not mean that all the difficulty will thus be overcome. Even when unnecessary complications are avoided, there remains the fundamental difficulty of persuading men who would justify themselves to their Judge that they have sinned against a Father's love and that their Heavenly Father is ready to

forgive. But this difficulty is spiritual, not intellectual—surely any Gospel that is intellectually difficult cannot be *the* Gospel—it is not the difficulty of understanding a scheme, but the difficulty of becoming a little child. And it is surely here that what we have to say of Christ and His cross should come in. All that He does for us must be read in the light of, and as illuminating, the Divine Fatherhood, and not in the light of legal and judicial relations. In so far as this has not been done we have helped to create schism and confusion in the religious life of the Chinese convert, which is apt, therefore, to try to organise itself around two foci, faith in the Fatherhood of God and faith in the merit of Jesus. Of these the former is the more immediate in its appeal and the more potent, because of its obvious relevance to a great religious need. We can hardly realise the varied relief it brings to the polytheistic or polydæmonistic mind. Rightly, therefore, has Mr Campbell Moody pointed out that the belief in God as Heavenly Father almost fills the religious consciousness of the convert to the exclusion of doctrines that we might think more characteristically Christian, if indeed anything can be more characteristically and exclusively Christian. Certainly the distinctive feature of Chinese Christianity is rather its theism than anything else. Converts are known as "worshippers of God," and not as "Christians," and God is to them distinctively the Heavenly Father. So much was this the case that missionaries used to welcome, not without surprise, any expressions of a piety centring more in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I confess that

this characteristic of the convert's piety does not trouble me so much as it once did, on their account. They have at least begun at the right end. Their religious experience is defective, but it may not be so defective as it appears in our interpretation of it. Salvation, they may say, is not by faith only, but by faith and obedience. That seems to us to indicate an experience limping along on the unequal legs of legalism and grace. But does it mean that they are seeking Salvation by merit, or endeavouring to win the favour of a justly offended God? Rather do they not start from the belief that God is our Father and mean no more than that we will find ourselves outside His family only when by unfilial conduct we leave it for the far country? Nevertheless it remains a weakness in their religious life that they do not bring Christ's dying for them into vital relation with God's Fatherly love, and are not led from the very beginning to see there that love's irrefragable proof. But if it is thus a rare thing to find the Cross in the centre of their religious life, may it not be in part because the preacher has failed to relate it to the new thought of God, their Heavenly Father, the wonder of which so absorbs them? It is left outside that interest so that when it comes into account it is, as I have said, a second focus of their religious life, and indeed brings with it ideas of God which cohere badly with their original childlike faith in the Father. Moreover, when, in accord with these legal ideas of God, the preacher proclaims the finished work of Christ as ground for a personal forgiveness, the desire for which is only feebly present, he is naturally taken to be offering a store of merit

wherewith to purchase Paradise; and so when he proceeds to insist on morality as a *sine qua non* of entrance there, his hearers not unnaturally take obedience to Christ's law as a condition of sharing His merit, or even, as in Dr Johnson's phrase, suppletory to His satisfaction on their behalf. How far all this is true generally of Chinese Christianity I cannot say. One of the features of the National Christian Conference which was noted with special satisfaction was that its type of Christianity was more Christocentric than had been expected. I hope that this does not mean any distraction of Chinese piety from its Theocentric focus in God's Paternal love, but rather such a reading of the Cross as places it in that focus.

It may still be questioned, however, whether in this increased emphasis the Conference represents the bulk of the Christian community. So far as Chinese Christianity has expressed itself through its "leaders" there may perhaps be detected in the expression a foreign—in justice to our American friends one might say an American—note. At least it is difficult to detect anything distinctively Chinese. It could hardly be otherwise in view of the training of some of the leaders abroad and the dominance of the missionary and the Western text-book in China. Yet it is some Chinese expression that one looks for. I hardly think, however, that there are traces as yet of any independent theological reaction on the part of Chinese Christians. Of course, elements in the Christian faith which we have, so to speak, outgrown, may appear. There is, for instance, the thought of

salvation from demons, and the confession that Jesus saves men by His power. This strikes us as very crude, but it is not peculiar to China. It probably arises there as elsewhere from a realistic way of thinking. Heaven is a place, progress into which is opposed by spiritual forces, angels, principalities, powers, life and death, height and depth, and out from these and through these only the Mighty Saviour can bring us. This is a conception of Salvation that can be found in the New Testament. Indeed, the more we do justice to the variety of religious experience reflected in the New Testament, declining to construe it all in terms of "the plan of Salvation," the less of what is distinctive shall we find in the experience of Chinese Christians. As to their own views on God, they are such as I dare say might be found among Christians at home, varying from an undisguised Tritheism to an Arian doctrine of Christ and a view of the Holy Spirit as a mere influence. There is in use regarding the Incarnation a phrase the origin of which I do not know. "Fen shen hsia fan," "divided his person and descended to this world," which is perhaps hardly orthodox. I once heard from a quite unlettered Christian a hint of the perpetual virginity of Mary, on the ground that reverence for one so highly honoured would inhibit all connubial intercourse. But nowhere does there seem to be serious original thinking. The Chinese mind when it gets working may throw fresh light on theology. If it were possible to foresee what that light would be, it would not be fresh when it came; but one may hazard a guess that it may

be on ethical and social matters rather than on theology proper. Yet who knows?

The inactivity of Chinese theology may be ascribed to foreign creeds being imposed on the Chinese Church. Still, the introduction of a creed cannot be avoided. The pioneer missionary who baptizes a convert on his profession of faith has created a precedent in favour of that profession as the creed of the Church there. It is easy to say that we should take nothing but what is essential. But what is essential? We get no help from such a statement as this: "We must never forget that Christianity is an oriental religion. Any elements in it not oriental are not essential to it." It would be as true to say that any elements in it that are "oriental" cannot be essential to a universal religion. Moreover the essential cannot be taken by a mortal man except in an amalgam with the non-essential. After all, that a mission take with it its beliefs and its organisation is not entirely to the bad, if only, having faith enough in the Spirit of God to believe that He will guide the Church in China, we frankly admit that our creeds and our organisations are provisional only, scaffolding, subject to any criticism that the Chinese Church may bring to bear upon them. For, of course, the lesson that we are all being taught is that the Church in China must be the Chinese expression of the Church Catholic. We have so far learned the lesson as to see in how many ways we have failed to promote this expression, if only through inadvertence. Even in such minor matters as ecclesiastical architecture and vestments and academic caps and gowns we have Westernised.

A Gothic church at Mou-fu, a Chinese clergyman in a surplice, the graduate of a missionary college wearing a mortar-board—why should such things be? They are trifles, except that they indicate a Western rather than a Chinese point of view. Our present troubles are due in part to our failure, and may, under God, hasten the accomplishment of the end we all profess to seek, the building up of a truly indigenous Church. It is true that if advance to this end has not been more rapid the fault has not been altogether on the foreign side. If there has been reluctance to lay down authority, there has also been reluctance to assume responsibility. But now both Chinese and foreign missionaries must seek to do away with any pretext for blaspheming the Church as the instrument, and Christians as "the tame dogs," of foreign interests. There are many influences at work that tend to reduce the world to a dull uniformity. The picture last December in the *Times* of the Chinese representatives at the Tariff Conference as faultlessly dressed in morning suits is not altogether pleasing. Of all international influences Christianity should be the most averse to the flattening out of distinctive national traits; and it is in the Christian Church that it must be shown that by becoming Christian the Chinese spirit does not cease to be Chinese. Only so is there hope of attaining our ultimate objective, the winning for the Kingdom of God of the Chinese race, with all its rich heritage of intellectual, artistic, and social achievement and all its vast and yet unexhausted possibilities. "Never surely was richer freight derelict on the great waters

of time." So Principal Cairns said of China in 1910; and still China is adrift in tempestuous seas, not so much derelict as with rival pilots fighting for control. Let our prayer for her be that Christ take the helm and bring her safe to the Haven of God.

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